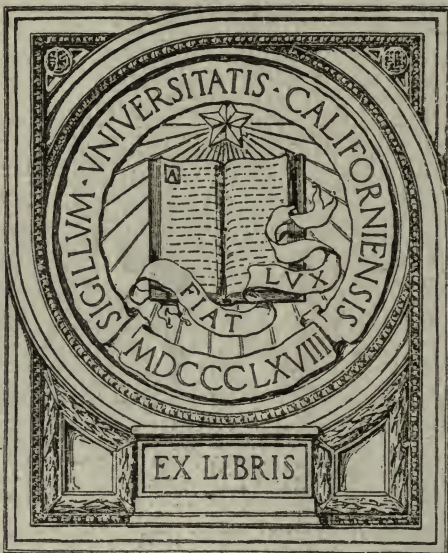


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B O T H W E L L



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B O T H W E L L

A POEM

In Six Parts

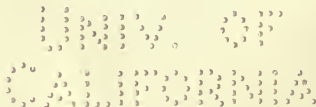
BY

WILLIAM EDMONDSTOUNE AYTOUN

D. C. L.

AUTHOR OF "LAYS OF THE SCOTTISH CAVALIERS"

THIRD EDITION, REVISED



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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TO

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART., M.P.,

IN MEMORY OF A VISIT TO HOLYROOD,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

IN sending a Third and Revised Edition of this Poem from the press, the Author is desirous of expressing his grateful acknowledgment to the public for the favour shown to his work, notwithstanding the many blemishes which were apparent in the first edition. Some of these blemishes were no doubt attributable to over-hasty composition ; while others arose from the difficulty of constructing a poem of this length in the form of a Monologue, and also from a desire (perhaps too scrupulously adhered to) of deviating in no respect from what the Author firmly believes to be the historical truth. In point of form the poem has undergone no alteration ; but much care has been bestowed upon the correction of isolated passages ; some superfluous matter has been excised ; and other amendments made, in the hope of giving more strength and vivacity

to the expression, and more interest to the narrative. In particular, the concluding canto has undergone strict revision, as, in its original form, it bore marks of a certain degree of languor, the consequence of a temporary illness. I say this by way of explanation only, conscious that I have many shortcomings to answer for, with no such excuse to plead.

I have further to thank those of my reviewers, who, in a spirit of honesty and kindness, have referred to my defects; for by doing so I must needs acknowledge that they have rendered me an essential service. In these days of voluminous publication, criticism is valuable to the reader, inasmuch as it places him on his guard; but it is invaluable to every author, who has the sincere desire of cultivating his art to the utmost of his ability, because it warns him of the faults which are the most glaringly conspicuous in his style, and rebukes him for every instance of undue carelessness or neglect. The best proof of my acquiescence in the justice of some of the remarks upon the construction of certain passages of "Bothwell," is the fact that I have made emendations accordingly; but beyond that, I have altered, or recast, many pas-

sages against which no censure was directed. The truth is, that, on the eve of publication, I did not feel by any means satisfied with my own performance. I had an instinctive feeling that I ought to have done it better. I was conscious that occasionally the expression did not adequately convey the idea, and that the versification was sometimes defective both in melody and in power. But there is a peculiarity attendant upon poetical composition, which is well known to those who practise it, though it may not be so to the general reader—and that is, that a certain period must elapse before the writer can discern the precise nature of his faults, or regain the power of correcting them. So long as the heat engendered by the original effort is upon him, his attempts at emendation will be in vain. But after a time, unless he is vainglorious and egotistical in the extreme, the faults which he has committed become as apparent to him as they were to others; and surely, then, it is his duty to retrieve such faults, or at least to make the attempt, although it is quite possible that he may not succeed in doing that in a manner commensurate with his desire.

As the general structure of "Bothwell," as I

now lay it before the public, has undergone no material alteration, it is still amenable to the criticism which was directed against its form. I trust, however, that it is so far amended in detail, as to show the public that the indulgence which they have extended to my humble efforts is deeply and gratefully appreciated.

EDINBURGH, *1st January* 1858.

PART FIRST.

B O T H W E L L.

PART FIRST.

I.

COLD—cold ! The wind howls fierce without ;

It drives the sleet and snow ;

With thundering hurl, the angry sea

Smites on the crags below.

Each wave that leaps against the rock

Makes this old prison reel—

God ! cast it down upon my head,

And let me cease to feel !

Cold—cold ! The brands are burning out,

The dying embers wane ;

The drops fall plashing from the roof

Like slow and sullen rain.

Cold—cold ! And yet the villain kernes
Who keep me fettered here,
Are feasting in the hall above,
And holding Christmas cheer.
When the wind pauses for its breath,
I hear their idiot bray,
The laugh, the shout, the stamping feet,
The song and roundelay :
They pass the jest, they quaff the cup,
The Yule-log sparkles brave,
They riot o'er my dungeon-vault
As though it were my grave.
Ay, howl again, thou bitter wind,
Roar louder yet, thou sea,
And drown the gusts of brutal mirth
That mock and madden me !
Ho, ho ! the Eagle of the North
Has stooped upon the main !
Scream on, O eagle, in thy flight,
Through blast and hurricane—
And, when thou meetest on thy way
The black and plunging bark

Where those who pilot by the stars
Stand quaking in the dark,
Down with thy pinion on the mast,
Scream louder in the air,
And stifle in the wallowing sea
The shrieks of their despair !
Be my avenger on this night,
When all, save I, are free ;
Why should I care for mortal man,
When men care nought for me ?
Care nought ? They loathe me, one and all,
Else why should I be here—
I, starving in a foreign cell,
A Scottish prince and peer ?

II.

O, that the madness, which at times
Comes surging through my brain,
Would smite me deaf, and dumb, and blind,
No more to wake again—
Would make me, what I am indeed,
A beast within a cage,

Without the sense to feel my bonds,
Without the power to rage—
Would give me visions dark and drear,
Although they were of hell,
Instead of memories of the place
From which I stooped and fell !

III.

I was the husband of a Queen,
The partner of a throne ;
For one short month the sceptred might
Of Scotland was my own.
The crown that father Fergus wore
Lay ready for my hand,
Yea, but for treason, I had been
The monarch of the land ;
The King of Scots, in right of her
Who was my royal bride,
The fairest woman on the earth
That ere the sun espied.
O Mary—Mary ! Even now,
Seared as I am to shame,

The blood grows thick around my heart

At utterance of thy name !

I see her, as in bygone days,

A widow, yet a child,

Within the fields of sunny France,

When heaven and fortune smiled.

The violets grew beneath her feet,

The lilies budded fair,

All that is beautiful and bright

Was gathered round her there.

O lovelier than the fairest flower

That ever bloomed on green,

Was she, the darling of the land,

That young and spotless Queen !

The sweet, sweet smile upon her lips,

Her eyes so kind and clear,

The magic of her gentle voice,

That even now I hear !

And nobles knelt, and princes bent

Before her as she came ;

A Queen by gift of nature she,

More than a Queen in name.

Even I, a rugged Border lord,
Unused to courtly ways,
Whose tongue was never tutored yet
To lisp in polished phrase ;
I, who would rather on the heath
Confront a feudal foe,
Than linger in a royal hall
Where lackeys come and go—
I, who had seldom bent the knee
At mass, or yet at prayer,
Bowed down in homage at her feet,
And paid my worship there !

IV.

My worship ? yes ! My fealty ? ay !—
Rise, Satan, if thou wilt,
And limn in fire, on yonder wall,
The pictures of my guilt—
Accuser ! Tempter ! Do thy worst,
In this malignant hour,
When God and man abandon me,
And I am in thy power—

Come up, and show me all the past,
Spare nothing that has been ;
Thou wert not present, juggling fiend,
When first I saw my Queen !

V.

I worshipped ; and as pure a heart
To her, I swear, was mine,
As ever breathed a truthful vow
Before Saint Mary's shrine :
I thought of her, as of a star
Within the heavens above,
That such as I might gaze upon,
But never dare to love.
I swore to her that day my troth,
As belted earl and knight,
That I would still defend her throne,
And aye protect her right.
Well ; who dare call me traitor now ?
My faith I never sold ;
These fingers never felt the touch
Of England's proffered gold.

Free from one damning guilt at least
My soul has ever been ;
I did not sell my country's rights,
Nor fawn on England's Queen !
Why stand'st thou ever at my head ?
False devil, hence, I say !
And seek for traitors, black as hell,
'Mongst those who preach and pray !
Get thee across the howling seas,
And bend o'er Murray's bed,
For there the falsest villain lies
That ever Scotland bred.
False to his vows, a wedded priest ;
Still falser to the Crown ;
False to the blood, that in his veins
Made bastardy renown ;
False to his sister, whom he swore
To guard and shield from harm ;
The head of many a felon plot,
But never once the arm !
What tie so holy that his hand
Hath snapt it not in twain ?

What oath so sacred but he broke
For selfish end or gain ?
A verier knave ne'er stepped the earth
Since this wide world began ;
And yet—he bandies texts with Knox,
And walks a pious man !

VI.

Get thee to crafty Lethington,
That alchemist in wile,
To grim Glencairn, the preacher's pride,
To Cassilis and Argyle—
To Morton, steeped in lust and guilt,
My old confederate he !—
O well for him that 'twixt us twain
There rolls the trackless sea !
O well for him that never more
On Scottish hill or plain,
My foot shall tread, my shadow fall,
My voice be heard again :
For there are words that I could speak
Would make him blench and quail,

Yea, shiver like an aspen tree,
Amidst his men of mail !—
Get thee to them, who sold their Queen
For foreign gold and pay ;
Assail them, rack them, mock them, fiend !
Bide with them till the day,
But leave me here alone to-night—
No fear that *I* will pray !

VII.

O many a deed that I have done
Weighs heavy on my soul ;
For I have been a sinful man,
And never, since my life began,
Have bowed me to control.
Perchance my temper was too rude,
Perchance my pride too great ;
Perchance it was my fantasy,
Perchance it was my fate !
I will not pour my muttered guilt
In any shaveling's ear,

Nor ask for prayer from mortal lips,
Were death and judgment near.
They shall not weigh those deeds of mine
By moral code or rule ;
Man deals with man by human laws,
And judges like a fool !

VIII.

In Scotland, when my name is heard,
From Orkney's utmost bound,
To where Tweed's silver waters run,
Men shudder at the sound.
They will not even deign to pray
For one so lost and vile—
They, who have raced to see me ride,
They, who have waited by my side
For nothing save a smile !
And yet I am not guiltier now
Than when they sought me there ;
Not more deserving of their curse,
Less worthy of their prayer !

IX.

What charge—what crime? Come, trusty peers,
Come all of you, and say
Why I should be a prisoner here,
And you be free to-day !
You dealt with England—that's assured !
You murdered Riccio too ;
And he who planned that felon deed,
And, with his wife in view,
Plunged his weak dagger in the corpse—
That coward wretch I slew !

X.

A king ? he was no king of mine !
A weak and worthless boy—
A fool in whose insensate hand
The fairest jewel of the land
Lay a neglected toy.
A man, indeed, in outward form,
But not a man in mind,

Less fit by far to rule the realm,
Than many a vassal hind.
O had I earlier sought the place
That late—too late—was mine ;
Had I but seen the woman then,
And deemed her less divine,
When first upon the Scottish shore
She, like a radiant star,
Descended, bringing hope and mirth
From those bright realms afar ;
When all men's hearts were blithe and glad
To greet their youthful Queen,
And once again within the land
A happy face was seen—
I might have made my homage more
Than that of subject peer,
And with my oath of loyalty
Have blent a vow more dear.
For I had friends enow to back ;
And, with my kith and kin,
Who held the Borders, far and wide,
And hemmed the marches in,

I might have bid defiance bold,
To all who dared advance
To claim the hand of Scotland's Queen,
The widow-child of France !
Had I but sent the cry abroad,
That neither English peer,
Nor Scottish lord from England's court
Should be our master here—
Had I but trusted to myself,
And bravely ta'en my stand,
Then Darnley never would have been
The King within the land.

XI.

Too late—too late ! Poor Mary stood
Unfriended and alone,
The tenant of a dreary hall,
A melancholy throne :
No more, as in her grandsire's days,
Surrounded by a ring
Of valiant lords and faithful knights,

Who for fair Scotland and her rights
Would die beside their King.
Set was the star of chivalry
That erst had gleamed so pure
Upon the crests of those who lay
On Flodden's fatal moor.
Gone were the merry times of old,
The masque, and mirth, and glee ;
And wearier was the palace then
Than prison needs to be.
Forbidden were the vesper bells,—
They broke the Sabbath calm !
Hushed were the notes of minstrelsy—
They chimed not with the psalm :
'Twas sin to smile, 'twas sin to laugh,
'Twas sin to sport or play,
And heavier than a hermit's fast
Was each dull holiday.
Was but the sound of laughter heard,
Or tinkling of a lute,
Or, worse than all, in royal hall,
The tread of dancing foot—

Then to a drove of gaping clowns
Would Knox with unction tell
The vengeance that in days of old
Had fallen on Jezebel !

XII.

She stood alone, without a friend
On whom her arm might lean :
No true and trusty counsellors
Were there to serve their Queen ;
But moody men, with sullen looks,
And faces hard and keen.
They who professed the later faith
Were trembling for their hold
Of the broad lands and fertile fields
Owned by the Church of old.
Apostles they of easy walk—
No martyrdom or pain—
What marvel if they loved a creed
That brought such pleasant gain ?
What marvel if their greedy hearts
Were wrung with abject fear,

Lest Rome should yet resume her sway,
And strip them of their gear ?
How could they serve a Papist Queen
With loyal hearts and true ?
How own a rank idolatress,
With Paradise in view ?
England was near, and England's Queen
Defied both France and Rome—
What marvel if they went to her,
And broke their faith at home ?

XIII.

And she, the sister, maiden Queen—
Rare maid and sister she !
True daughter of the Tudor line,
Who claimed her crown by right divine,
And ruled o'er land and sea—
She who might well, without disgrace,
Or any thought of fear,
Have deigned, from her established place,
To succour one so near—

She, whom her slaves call wise in thought,
And generous in deed,—
How did she deal with Scotland's Queen,
How help her in her need ?

XIV.

By heaven !—if I dare speak the word,—
I, steeped in guilt and crime,
I, who must bear the heaviest curse
Of this distracted time—
By heaven ! I think, had Scotland stood
Unfriended and alone,
Left to herself, without intrigue
From any neighbour throne ;
Free to decide, and mould, and fix
The manner of her sway,
No Scottish soul had ever stooped
To cozen or betray !
I say it—I, the twice betrayed,
Their victim and their tool—
I, whom they made the sacrifice
For their unrighteous rule ;

I say it, even for the men
Who drove me here to shame—
Theirs is the lesser, paltrier guilt,
And theirs the meaner blame !

XV.

They durst not, had they stood alone,
Inheritors of names
That over Christendom have flown,
As stream the northern flames,—
Whose fathers, in their silent graves,
Sleep peacefully and well,
Scotland's great champions while they lived,
And greater when they fell—
They durst not so have wronged their blood,
And smirched their fair renown,
Have flung their honour to the winds,
And leagued against the crown.
But at the gate the Temptress stood,
Not beautiful nor young ;
Nor luring, as a Syren might,
By magic of her tongue ;

High and imperious, stately, proud,
Yet artful to beguile,
A woman, without woman's heart,
Or woman's sunny smile :
By nature tyrannous and vain,
By state-craft false and mean,
She hated Mary from her soul,
As woman and as Queen !

XVI.

Men hate, because in act or strife
They cross each other's path ;
Short is the space for jealousy,
And fierce the hour of wrath :
Their passion, like the autumn flood,
Sweeps o'er the plains below ;
But woman's hate runs deeper far,
Though noiseless in its flow.
A fairer face, a higher place,
More worship, more applause,
Will make a woman loathe her friend
Without a deadlier cause.

The darkness struggles with the light,
The gloaming with the day,
Ay, even in the deeps of night
Will shadows force their way :
For ever, when the peerless moon
Is riding clear in heaven,
Some sullen cloud, by envious winds,
Athwart its disc is driven.
Yet vainly does the shadow seek
A borrowed light to steal,
The cloud is darker for the orb
It cannot quite conceal.
And so, though minions bent the knee
To England's haughty Queen,
And swore in verse and fulsome rhyme,
That never, since the birth of time,
Was such an angel seen,
The instinct of her cold proud heart
Despised the sordid lie,
Yet still she smiled, as women smile,
Who will not deign to sigh.

XVII.

And cause had she to hate and fear
Past woman's pride alone ;
For Boleyn's daughter sate not safe
Nor surely on her throne.
And many a lord of England thought
On Mary's right and claim,
And owned her in their wassail cups
As Queen, though not by name.
But why this paltering with the past ?
Why mutter idly here,
As though I were in dull debate
With council or with peer ?
Is it the dripping from the roof,
Or plunging of the sea,
That thus infects me with the weight
Of their monotony ?
Why should I brood o'er perished things,
And, like a dotard, dream
Of visions seen but not fulfilled
Far up life's whirling stream ?

Man cannot quite control his thoughts,
Nor keep them in his power,
Yet these of mine have wandered wide
Within the bypast hour.
What might have been, in phantom mist
Has vanished long ago ;
I need not try to trace it out,
What was, and is, I know.
Enough—no word of love was breathed
In Mary's ear by me,
When most she needed manly aid,
And when her hand was free.
But Darnley came, and woo'd, and won—
They say that death should close
All count of hate and enmity
Between the deadliest foes—
And yet—I will not forge a lie,
Here on my wretched bed—
I hated Darnley while he lived ;
I hate him now, though dead !

XVIII.

She wedded Darnley—and a fool
In every sense was he,
With scarce the wit to be a knave
If born in low degree.
But folly, when it walks abroad
In royal guise and strain,
Will never lack for knavery
To loiter in its train.
Loose comrades of the baser sort
Were always by his side,
To whisper lewdness in his ear,
And pander to his pride.
And men who wore a graver mask,
Whose hearts were all untrue,
Essayed—it was an easy task—
To make him traitor too !

XIX.

The madman ! Had he only known
His duty, style, and place,

When lifted up beside the throne,
And raised to such a grace—
Had he—the winner of the prize,
For whose transcendant charms,
If deeds availed, not idle words,
Through Europe wide, a thousand lords,
Famous and proud, had drawn their swords
And courted death in arms—
Had he been gentle, faithful, true,
Kind, courteous, nobly-bred,
To her who found him fugitive,
Yet took him to her bed—
Why then, in spite of England's Queen,
Of treason hatched at home,
Of foreign league, or civil war,
Or danger yet to come,
He might have kept the foremost place
Without contending claim,
Have won a kingdom for his race
And left an honoured name.

XX.

Not as a Prince of high estate
Came Darnley to the Queen :
His pride provoked the nobles' hate,
His folly stirred their spleen.
And fiercely blazed Elizabeth's wrath
Against the luckless pair,
For still the phantom in her path
Had been a Scottish heir.
And well she knew the ancient strain
That rings through Scotland free—
That the French Queen should bear the son
To rule all Britain to the sea,
And from the Bruce's blood should come
As near as in the ninth degree.
She was a tigress, all too fierce
For rashest love's essay ;
None durst approach the royal lair
Where mateless long she lay.
And it was more than gall to her
To think that Mary's son

Must sit one day upon her seat—

Must end what she begun.

She might have frowned a cold consent,

Had Mary stooped to take,

As spouse, an English vassal peer,

For her kind sister's sake.

But Darnley stood too near the throne,

And strong his place had been,

If ready, like a valiant knight,

Against the world to hold his right,

And more—as love and honour bade,

To vindicate the choice she made,

By duty to the Queen.

But neither honour, truth, nor love

Had power his selfish soul to move ;

As cold of heart, as weak of brain,

Unused his passion to restrain,

At once the madman claimed to be

In name and power a King !

He, weak as water, frail as sand,

A beggar when on Mary's hand

He placed the marriage ring !

Then, false to her who gave him all,
And lost to sense of shame,
He banded with her deadliest foes
To stain her spotless name !

XXI.

There was that Riccio—sharp and sly ;
No friend of mine, I swear,
For in that dark Italian eye
Was craft beyond my mastery,
And in his cold and subtle smile
I read the evidence of guile
Was deep implanted there.
He could not bend me to his will—
No fanatic was I ;
Nor would I lend a helping hand
To rivet on my native land
The chains of Italy.
Right little cared I for the creeds
Of either Church, I trow ;
I recked not which should win or lose,
And more—I reck not now.

But lost on me was all his speech,
His policy was vain :
What was to me the Papal cause
In France or yet in Spain ?
I never stood, as Atholl did,
A soldier sworn of Rome,
Nor asked for foreign surgery
To stanch the wounds at home.
Yet Riccio may have faithful been,
And to his mistress true,
For those who hated him the worst
Were knaves and traitors too.
I cannot tell—but this I know,
That till my dying hour
I never shall forget the shriek
That rung from Mary's bower.

XXII.

'Twas night—mirk night—the sleet beat on,
The wind, as now, was rude,
And I was lonely in my room
In dreary Holyrood.

I heard a cry, a tramp of men,
A clash of steel below,
And from my window, in the court
I saw the torches glow.
More common were such sounds to me
Than hum of evening hymn ;
I caught my sword, and hurried out
Along the passage dim.
But O, the shriek that thrilled me then—
The accents of despair,
The man's imploring agony,
The woman's frantic prayer !
"O, for the love of God and Christ,
Forbear—I will not fly !
O mistress—Queen—protect me yet,
I am not fit to die !"
"Hold ! hold your hands ! you shall not strike,
Unless you slay me too ;
My guard ! O help ! they kill the Queen !
Help ! husband—nobles—you—
O Ruthven—Douglas—as you trust
For mercy in your need,

For Christ's dear sake, be satisfied—

Do not this monstrous deed !

What ! Darnley, thou ? let go my arm—

Unhand me, dastard knave !

To me—to me—all Scottish hearts—

Help ! treason ! Come and save !”

XXIII.

A door flew wide. I saw them all—

Ruthven in mail complete,

George Douglas, Ker of Fawdonside,

And Riccio at their feet.

With rapiers drawn and pistols bent,

They seized their wretched prey ;

They wrenched her garments from his grasp,

They stabbed him where he lay.

I saw George Douglas raise his arm,

I saw his dagger gleam ;

And then I heard the dying yell,

And Mary's piteous scream.

I saw her writhe in Darnley's arms

As in a serpent's fold—

The coward ! he was pale as death,
But would not loose his hold !
And then the torches waved and shook,
And louder grew the din,
And up the stair, and through the doors
The rest came trooping in.
What could I do ? No time was that
To listen or to wait ;
Thronged were the rooms with furious men,
And close beset the gate.
Morton and Lindsay kept the court,
With many a deadly foe ;
And swords are swift to do their work
When blood begins to flow.
Darkling I traced the passage back
As swiftly as I came,
For in the crowd that tossed beneath
I heard them shout my name.
Enough !—that night one victim died
Before Queen Mary's face,
And in my secret heart I doomed
Another in his place.

Not that I cared for Riccio's life,
They might have worked their will ;
Though base it was for belted knights
So poor a wretch to kill.
But I had seen my Queen profaned,
Outraged before my face,
By him, the dastard, heartless boy,
The land's and our disgrace.
'Twas he devised the felon plot—
'Twas he that planned the crime—
He led the murderers to her room—
And—God—at what a time !

XXIV.

They call me savage, brutal, base,
And more—because I wed
A trembling, sickly, shrewish dame,
And put her from my bed.
Heaven wot, the match was ill ordained ;
Her heart was given elsewhere,
And for a second courtship, I
Had neither time nor care.

It may be that she pined alone ;
It may be in my hall
She met with ruder company
Than pleased her taste withal :
I may have wronged her by neglect,
I may have galled her pride ;
But never brooked she scathe or scorn
While she was Bothwell's bride.

XXV.

But he, whom Mary's love had raised
To such a high degree,
The lord and husband of her heart,
The father soon to be,
The man who, in the hour of pain,
Should still have kept her side—
How paid he back the matchless debt,
How did he tend his bride ?
Why, had he never left her room,
But, like the grooms of yore,
To lay him on the rushes down
His lady's nest before,

To guard her all the livelong night,
And slumber scarce till dawn,
When her dear voice, so low and sweet,
Like breathings of a fawn,
Told that the time of rest was o'er,
And then a simple hymn
Arose, as if an angel led
The choir of seraphim—
Would such a service have been more
Than he was bound to give ?
Nay, if he dared to make it less,
Deserved the boy to live ?

XXVI.

I was a witness on that night
Of all his shame and guilt ;
I saw his outrage on the Queen,
I saw the blood he spilt ;
And, ere the day had dawned, I swore,
Whilst spurring through the sand,
I would avenge that treachery,
And slay him with my hand—

Or, in the preachers' holier phrase,
Would purge him from the land !

XXVII.

Ah me ! and this is Christmas eve ;
And here alone I lie,
With nothing save my own wild thoughts
For bitter company !
My own wild thoughts, that will not pass,
Howe'er I bid them go—
My torture, yet the only friends
That visit me below.
Full many a hearth is decked this night
To hail the blessed morn,
On which, in ages long ago,
The Saviour child was born—
The churches all are wreathed with green,
The altars set with flowers,
And happy lowly hearts wait on
And count the passing hours ;
Until the midnight chimes proclaim
The hallowed season come,

When Heaven's broad gates are opened wide,
And Hell's loud roar is dumb.
Then myriad voices in acclaim
The song of homage yield,
That once from angels' lips was heard
By shepherds in the field.
Stilled for a time are angry thoughts,
The hearts of men are mild ;
The father with a holier thrill
Bends o'er his slumbering child ;
New is the kiss the husband gives
Unto his wedded wife,
For earthly love, when blest by Heaven,
Ends not with earthly life ;
And, fountain-like, o'er all the world,
Where Christ's dear name is known,
Arise the sounds of prayer and praise
Toward the eternal throne.
But I, a slave in bondage here,
Racked—torn by mad despair—
How can I falter forth the words
Of praise or yet of prayer ?

Men drove me from them, as a wolf
From mountain-folds is driven,
And what I could not win on earth
How dare I seek from Heaven?
Ay, howl again, thou winter wind—
Roar louder yet, thou sea!
For nothing else can stun the thoughts
That rise to madden me!

PART SECOND.

PART SECOND.

I.

THE sun is bright, the day is warm,
The breeze is blowing free—
Come, I will rouse me from my lair,
And look upon the sea.
'Tis clear and blue, with here and there
A little fleck of foam ;
And yonder glides a stately ship,
Bound on her voyage home.
The fishers, on the scanty sward,
Spread out their nets to dry,
And whistle o'er their lazy task
In happy vacancy.
Swift by the window skims the tern,
On light and glancing wing,

And every sound that rises up
Gives token of the spring.
Fair is the sight, yet strange to me ;
No memories I recall,
While gazing on the headland cliffs,
And waves that leap and fall ;
No visions of my boyish days,
Or manhood's sterner prime,
Arise from yonder watery waste,
To cheer me for a time.

II.

For I was reared among the hills,
Within a Border home,
Where, brawling down their narrow glens,
The mountain torrents come ;
And well I know the bonny braes
Where the first primrose blows,
And shrinking tufts of violets
Rise from the melting snows,
Ere yet the hazel leaf is out,
Or birches show their green,

Or, on the sad and sullen ash,
A kindling bud is seen.
O Hermitage, by Liddel's side,
My old ancestral tower !
Were I again but lord of thee—
Not owning half the power
That in my days of reckless pride
I held, but cast away—
I would not leave thee, Border keep,
Until my dying day !
Wise was Buccleuch, and Cessford too,
Who stoutly held their own,
And little cared, amidst their clans,
For threat from either throne.
They range at will the mountain paths,
They hear the falcon cry ;
And here, within a loathly cell,
A fettered slave am I.

III.

Who owns thee now, fair Hermitage ?
Who sits within my hall ?

What banner flutters in the breeze
Above that stately wall ?
Does yet the court-yard ring with tramp
Of horses and of men ;
Do bay of hounds and bugle-note
Sound merry from the glen ?
Or art thou, as thy master is,
A rent and ruined pile,
Once noble, but deserted now
By all that is not vile ?
What matters it ? These eyes of mine
Shall never see thee more ;
Still in my thought must thou abide
As stately as of yore,
When, Warden of the Marches three,
In Mary's right I came
To still the rugged Border feuds,
And trample out the flame.

IV.

Good faith ! I had but little zeal
To meddle with the knaves,

Who simply kept their fathers' rule,
And fought for bloody graves.
No war was then between the lands,
Else swift and sure, I ween,
Each Border clan, on Scottish soil,
Had mustered for their Queen ;
The tidings of an English raid
Had joined them, heart and hand ;
For well the jackmen knew the wealth
Of canny Cumberland.
One note of war—and all our feuds
Had vanished like the snow
From off the fells by Teviot-side,
When the warm May winds blow.
But peace abroad breeds strife at home ;
Old cause of quarrel rose ;
Clan fought with clan, and name with name,
As fierce and deadly foes.
To them came I in evil hour—
Most perilous the tide ;
For he who seeks to part a fray,
Wins strokes from either side.

Saint Andrew ! 'twas no easy task
To hunt an Armstrong down,
Or make a Johnstone yield his sword
At summons from the Crown :
Yet, ere a week had passed away,
One half my work was done,
And safe within my castle lay
Whitehaugh and Mangerton.
I had them all, but only one,
John Elliot of the Park,
As stalwart and as bold a man
As ever rode by dark.
I sought him far, I sought him near,
He baffled all my men ;
At last I met him, face to face,
Within the Billhope glen.

V.

Short parley passed between us twain—
“Thou art the Warden?” “Ay !
Thou Elliot of the Park?” “I am.”
“Wilt yield thee?” “Come and try !”

We lighted down from off our steeds,
We tied them to a tree ;
The sun was sinking in the west,
And all alone were we.
Out flew the steel, and then began
A sharp and desperate strife ;
For Elliot fought to 'scape the cord,
I fought for fame and life.
Ha, ha ! were he alive again,
And on this dungeon floor,
What joy, with such a man as that,
To cross the sword once more !
The blows he fetched were stark and strong,
And so were mine, I ween,
Until I cleft his head-piece through,
And stretched him on the green.
“ Wilt yield thee now ? ” “ I will not yield,
But an ye promise grace.”
“ That must you ask upon your knee,
Before our Sovereign's face.”
Blinded with blood, he struggled up—
“ Lord Earl ! ” he said, “ beware !

No man shall take me living yet ;
Now follow, if you dare ! ”
I slipped upon the broken moss ;
And in the sheugh we rolled,
Death-grappling, silent, heaving each
Within the other's hold.
He passed above me, and I felt—
Once—twice—his dagger drive ;
But mine went deeper through his breast—
I rose, but half alive !
All spun around me—trees and hills—
A mist appeared to rise ;
Yet one thing saw I clearly yet
Before my fading eyes :
Not half a rood beyond the burn,
A man lay stiff and stark ;
I knew it was my stubborn foe,
John Elliot of the Park.
I strove in vain to sound my horn,
No further strength had I ;
And reeling in that lonely glen,
I fell—but not to die.

VI.

I wakened in the Hermitage
From out my heavy swoond,
Thanks to the leech, who would not cease
From probing of my wound :
And there I lay, for many a day,
Weak, weary, dull, and wan,
With little blood within my veins,
To make me feel like man.
In sooth, it was a heavy time—
I heard the bugles blow,
The horses neigh, the bridles ring,
The soldiers come and go.
I heard the voice of Ormiston,
In short and gruff command,
As outwards from the castle-gate
He led his trooper band.
Then silence ; and that hateful sound,
The leech's stealthy tread—
Aha ! when I had strength to stir,
How swift the villain fled !

Then the long shades of afternoon—

The twilight fastening in—

The night, when still I heard the brook

Come roaring down the linn.

Strange ! that my memory should recall

Those distant things to view—

That every sound, and sight, and thought,

Should visit me anew !

Have I not heard a hundred times

The winter tempests roar,

Since first they spread that wretched couch

Here, on the dungeon floor ?

Have I not heard the ocean-surge

Come bellowing to the strand,

When peals of thunder shook the heaven,

When flashed the levin brand ?

The hurleys that might wake the dead,

Pass from me with their rage ;

Not so the sounds that reached my bed

In lonely Hermitage.

VII.

But O, that day, when first I rose,
A cripple, from my lair—
Threw wide the casement, breathed my fill,
Of fresh and wholesome air,
Drank in new life, and felt once more
The pulse's stirring play—
O, madly in my heart I keep
The memory of that day !
I thought to hear the gorcock crow,
Or ouzel whistle shrill,
When, lo ! a gallant company
Came riding up the hill :
No banner was displayed on high,
No sign of war was seen,
No armed band, with spear and brand,
Encompassed Scotland's Queen.
She came, on gentle errand bound—
The generous and the free—
She came to cheer her wounded knight,
She came to comfort me.

VIII.

She waited not for guard or groom,
But passed into the hall ;
Around her were the four Maries,
Herself the rose of all.
I never thought that woman's voice
Could thrill my being so,
As when she thanked me for my zeal
In accents soft and low.
I saw the tear within her eye,
When, bending down to me,
She placed her lily hand in mine,
And bade me quit my knee.
“Dear lord,” she said, “’tis woman’s right
To comfort when she may ;
Then chafe not, if we take by storm
Your Border-keep to-day.
We come not to invade your hall,
Or rudely mar your rest ;
Though well I know, at fitter time,
I were a welcome guest.

But could I quit the Border-side
Without my thanks to him
Who paid his service far too well,
At risk of life and limb ?
Ah, Bothwell ! you have bravely done,
And all my thanks are poor ;
Would God that more were bent like you
To make my throne secure !
True heart ! strong arm ! I cannot place
A chaplet on your brow,
For the old rites of chivalry
Are lost or banished now ;
But, trust me, never was a Queen
More debtor to a peer,
Than I, brave Earl, am proud to own,
Before the presence here !
How say you, brother ? ”

IX.

At the word,
I felt a sudden chill ;

I knew not Murray as he rode
Beside her up the hill.
I marked him not within my hall—
No wonder, for my eye
Was fixed on one bright form alone
Of all that company !
But there he stood, the pulseless man,
The calculating lord,
Swart in the Congregation's garb,
And leaning on his sword.
Upon his lip there was a smile
That almost seemed a sneer ;
Softly he spoke, but what he said
Dwelt not within mine ear.
Some phrase it was of mild assent,
Framed in that glossy strain
That statesmen use to hide their thoughts
When honest words were vain ;
Some staid and studied compliment,
As soft and cold as snow—
I would not, after desperate fight,
Have thanked a trooper so !

And then he paused, and glancing round
Upon the royal train,
Began to falter forth excuse,
Like one who spoke in pain,
Why Darnley came not with the Queen—
How could the fool be there?
Had he not left his Sovereign's Court,
Despite her tears and prayer?—
Left her, with base unmanly threat,
Alone to weep and pine;
That he might lie in harlots' laps,
And hiccup o'er his wine?

X.

Well know I now what Murray meant,
But then I did not care—
The sight of Darnley in my hall
Had darkened all the air.
In sooth, I wished them far away,
The Maries, and the rest,
That I might throw me at her feet,
Might ease my bursting breast,—

Might tell her how I dared to love,
And how I hid my flame,
Till he, the wretched, perjured boy,
Had filled his cup with shame—
Might ask her, of her sovran grace,
To take and keep my vow,
To rule James Hepburn's heart and hand,
Not give him promise now—
One word, one little word of hope
Was all that he would crave,—
Hope? Never hope could rise for me,
Till Darnley filled his grave!

XI.

For then indeed I felt the spell
That turned weak Arran's brain,
That drove the luckless Chastellar
To love and die in vain.
With tenfold power that magic charm
Was stirring in my soul;
Though she had spurned me from her feet,
I must have spoke the whole.

Far better to have told her all,
And waked at once her scorn,
Than brood o'er passions ill-concealed,
And wait for crimes unborn.
Unborn, but yet, alas ! conceived—
Well—well ! what reck's it now ?
A child might weep, and moan, and fret,
That yonder glorious bow,
Which right before me spans the seas,
Should melt in mist and rain :
What is it but a pageantry
That will not come again ?
Yea, let it pass with other things,
Old hope, remorse, and fear ;
All these are phantoms, dead and gone—
They shall not force a tear !

XII.

Bright was the morn, and fresh the wind,
And clear the trumpet's call,
As, strong once more in heart and limb,
I issued from my hall.

A hundred troopers, cased in mail,
Were mounted on the sward ;
Men who would ride through steel and flame
At signal of their lord.
The knaves ! I know they loved me well ;
And what a wild acclaim
Rang through the valley, up the glen,
To greet me as I came !
Then spears were raised, and swords were swung,
And banners tossed on high,
In such a storm of wild delight,
As drives men onward to the fight,
For death or victory !
The blood was warm within me then,
And proudly did it bound,
As, clad again in knightly garb,
I wheeled my charger round ;
O'er moss and moor, o'er hill and heath,
Right gallantly we sped,
Until we paused, and drew the rein
Hard by the river's head.

Backward on Castle Hermitage

One lingering look I cast ;

I saw it in its strength and pride—

That look, it was the last !

XIII.

Men say that in those northern seas,

Far out from human view,

There lies a huge and whirling pit,

As deep as though the globe were split,

To let the waters through ;

All round and round for many a mile

Spreads the strong tide's resistless coil ;

And if a ship should chance to pass

Within the Maelstrom's sweep,

Nor helm nor sail will then avail

To drive her through the deep.

Headlong she rolls on racing waves,

Still narrowing in her round,

Still drawn towards the awful brim

Of that abyss profound.

Then one sharp whirl, one giant surge,
A lurch, a plunge, a yell,—
And down for ever goes the ship
Into the raging hell !
God wot, I am not fanciful ;
But from that fatal day,
When first I leagued with other men,
And left my open way,
No power had I to check my course,
No will to pause or stay.
They knew that I was proud and bold,
And foremost still would go,
Where danger waited in the path,
Nor ever count the foe.
And they had read my secret heart,
And set their cunning snare ;
O, had my only thought been love,
They'd not have bound me there !

XIV.

But there was hatred in my soul ;
And more, that glorious sin,

Ambition, cursed by all who lose,
No crime for those who win.
What sceptre ever yet was gained
Without the reddened hand ?
Light penance serves to cleanse the stain
From those who rule a land.
Hero, and king, and conqueror—
So ring the changes here,
For those who rise by any art,
No matter what they were !
Wretch, villain, traitor, regicide—
These are the counter-names
For men whom fortune thrusts aside,
However bold their aims.
I would not care for vulgar speech ;
But, O, it drives me wild
To think that cold and reckoning knaves
Could sway me like a child !
Tell me no more of guilt and shame !
'Tis worse to be a fool,
To play the subtler traitors' game,
Their partner and their tool !

XV.

'Twas in Craigmillar's dusky hall
That first I lent my ear
To that deep tempter, Lethington,
With Murray bending near.
The theme was Darnley and his deeds,
His vain capricious mind,
That neither counsel could control,
Nor sense of honour bind ;
His wild outrageous insolence
To men of high degree,
Who, but for Mary's love and grace,
Were better far than he.
All this I heard, and answered not ;
But when he came to speak
Of Mary's wrongs, and Mary's woes,
The blood was in my cheek.
He told me of her breaking heart,
Of bitter tears she shed,
Of the sad cry she raised to heaven,
" O God ! that I were dead ! " —

Of that dull grief which, more than pain,
Has power to waste and kill ;
Yet in her secret heart, he said,
Queen Mary loved him still.

XVI.

“Loves him?” “Why, ay! Our thought was bent,
At first, on Darnley’s banishment ;
On loosing of the nuptial tie,
As holy Church allows—
An easy thing, for never yet
Was such a faithless spouse !
But when we broke it to the Queen,
She would not deign to hear ;
He was the father of her child,
And so to her was dear.
What then is left ? While Darnley lives,
He’s nothing less than King ;
An insect monarch, if you will,
But yet with power to sting.
Why, even you, brave Earl, so high
In honour and in place,

You—Warden—Admiral—must bend
Before his Royal Grace !
Nay, chafe not at my open speech,
For others feel the wrong :
Great God ! to think that one so weak
Should thus defy the strong !
I speak not only for myself—
I speak Lord Murray's mind ;
Your brother Huntley, and Argyle,
They will not lag behind.
You know their strength. Yet more remains ;
The banished lords are ours—
Lindsay and Morton, were they here,
Would help us with their powers.
In evil hour, in evil cause,
They lent weak Darnley aid ;
They trusted to his lying tongue,
And therefore were betrayed.

XVII.

“ Surely 'tis time to stanch the wounds
That vex the land so sore,

To knit the noble brotherhood
More closely than of yore ;
To curb the wild fanatic mood
That waxes day by day,
And make the surly preachers know
Their duty, to obey !
But for this brainless, frantic fool,
Our course were plain and clear ;
If Scotland's nobles back their Queen,
What danger need they fear ?
No more will we of foreign league,
Or foreign wedlock hear !
A better husband for the Queen
We'll find among our own ;
As fit a champion as the Bruce,
To fill the Scottish throne !
More might I say—but, valiant Earl,
On you our fate depends ;
Speak but the word, give but the sign,
I'll answer for our friends !
Scotland is weary of the load
That lies upon her now,

And Death is breathing, cold and damp,
Upon our Sovereign's brow.
Here is the stalwart arm we need
To save the State and Queen ;
Your own brave blood was freely shed
For Mary, on the green—
But Darnley's !—for one drop of yours
His life were all too mean."

XVIII.

I've heard that poison-sprinkled flowers
Are sweeter in perfume
Than when, untouched by deadly dew,
They opened in their bloom ;
I've heard that men, condemned to die,
Have quaffed the seasoned wine
With keener relish than the juice
Of the untampered vine ;
I've heard that with the witches' song,
Though harsh and rude it be,
There blends a wild mysterious strain
Of weirdest harmony,

So that the listener far away
Must needs approach the ring,
Where, on the savage Lapland moors,
The demon chorus sing ;
And I believe the devil's voice
Sinks deeper in the ear,
Than any whispers sent from heaven,
However soft and clear.
Yes ! I was cozened, cheated, led—
No beast more blindly goes
Towards the shambles, than I went
When flattered by my foes !
Flattered—and bribed ! Ay, that's the word—
No need to hide it now—
Bribed by the proffer of a crown
To glitter on my brow !
O never let the man of deeds,
Though strong, and bold, and brave,
Though he has shaken thrones like reeds,
Try issue with a knave !
Might is no match for studied craft,
Which makes the best its thrall :

When earth is mined beneath his feet,
The champion needs must fall.

XIX.

Now, were a reverend father here—
For such there are, I know,
Good men and true, who preach the word,
Without invoking fire and sword
To lay the temples low—
Men who proclaim their mission, peace ;
And count it worse than shame
To shed their doctrines forth like oil
Upon a land in flame—
Had I such ghostly counsellor,
He'd tell me straight to throw
All rancorous feelings from my breast ;
To bless my deadliest foe ;
To pray for that same Lethington ;
To raise my heart to heaven,
And supplicate that Murray's soul
May not depart unshriven !

Nay—more than that—for Morton's weal

My prayer must also rise :

A proper instrument were I

To lift him to the skies !

The older faith enjoined a mass,

A requiem to be said

Above the bier, or for the soul

Of any foeman dead.

That may be priestcraft—idle sound,

As modern preachers say—

A lie, that neither saint in heaven,

Nor guard on hell, obey :

But to forgive them, while they live ;

To breathe a prayer for them,

The traitors who have robbed their Queen

Of state and diadem—

Have shut her in a lonely isle,

To pine, and waste, and die—

A prayer for villains such as these

Were insult to the sky !

XX.

I yielded ; for the deed proposed
Was nothing new or strange.
Though ne'er a Lord in Scotland stirred,
My purpose, oath, and secret word
Had known nor check nor change.
Men feel by instinct, swift as light,
The presence of the foe,
Whom God has marked, in after years,
To strike the mortal blow ;
The other, though his brand be sheathed
At banquet or in hall,
Hath a forebodement of the time
When one or both must fall.
That bodement darkened on my soul
When first I set my eye
On Darnley in his trim attire,
All youth, and mirth, and hope, and fire,
A blazoned butterfly.
Methought I saw, like northern seers
When shadowed by the cloud,

Around his pomp and bravery

The phantom of a shroud !

It chilled me then, it haunts me now—

Let this at least be said,

No thought of slaughter crossed my mind

Till David Riccio bled.

Then both my heart and hand were freed ;

And often in a dream,

When, through the corridors of sleep

Rang Mary's piercing scream,

The scene would change from Holyrood

To some sequestered glen,

Where I and Darnley met alone,

Apart from other men.

How often have we twain been thrown

In death-lock on the sand,

Eye fixed on eye, breath meeting breath,

And steel in either hand !

And I have wakened, panting sore,

My forehead wet with dew,

More shaken by the phantom strife

Than any that was true !

XXI.

They prate of murder—'tis a word
Most odious to the ear,
Condemned alike by God and man :
But peer may meet with peer.
If laggard laws delay redress
For insult or for wrong,
There is no arbiter like steel
So ready and so strong.
Then they contend on equal ground,
And equal arms they wield ;
What does the knight or captain more
Who strikes in tented field ?
And—by the sun that shines above !—
Had fate ordained it so,
That I and Darnley might have met,
As foeman meets his foe,
One half my life, when life was prized,
Were ransom all too poor
For one bare hour, 'twixt dawn and mirk,
Of grappling on the moor !

XXII.

But kings—forsooth, they called him King!—
Are cravens now. They claim
Exemption from the knightly rule,
And skulk behind their name.
They dare not, as in Arthur's days,
When chivalry began,
Tell their accuser that he lies,
And meet him, man to man.
They are not dauntless, like the Bruce,
All Europe's foremost knight,
Aye ready with his stalwart hand
To justify his right—
Not valiant, as was royal James,
Who died on Flodden field,
The best and bravest of his race,
Unknowing how to yield.
They sit behind their silken screens,
Fenced closely by their guard,
Their archers and their bandoleers,
Like women kept in ward.

No reckoning give they for their deeds,
Whatever those may be—
Too high was Darnley in his place
To measure swords with me.
I hold the creed that earthly wrong
On earth must be repaid ;
And, if the battle be denied,
And law is drugged, and stupified,
Why—vengeance comes in aid !

XXIII.

'Tis strange what freaks the fancy plays,
When sense is shut by sleep ;
How a vague horror thrills the frame,
And awful sounds and deep
Boom on the ear, as if the earth
Moaned in her central caves
Beneath the weight of buried men,
And stirred them in their graves !
That night as on my bed I lay,
The terror passed on me ;

It wrung my heart, it froze my blood,
It forced my eyes to see
The spectral fire upon the hearth,
The arras' stiffened fold,
The gaunt, mute figures on its web,
In tarnished silk and gold,—
All there—no motion—but a step
Was creaking on the stair ;
It made me pant, it made me gasp—
Who was it sought me there ?
I saw my sword beside the bed,
I could not stretch my arm—
I could not stir, I could not cry,
I lay beneath a charm.
The door swung slowly on its hinge,
And in a figure came,
In form and face like Lethington,
Most like, yet not the same.
Those were his eyes that glared on mine,
But in them was a gleam
That burned like fire into my brain ;
I felt them in my dream.

And thus he spoke, in Maitland's voice,
But deeper far than he :—
“ Rise up, Lord Bothwell, from thy bed—
Rise up, and follow me ! ”

XXIV.

I rose, but not as men arise
At hasty call or loud ;
I rose as rigid as a corpse
Swathed in its burial-shroud.
Spellbound I stood upon the floor,
Bereft of power or will,
For well I knew, where'er he went,
That I must follow still.
Then up the stair he led the way,
By winding steps and steep,
Out to the topmost battlement
Of old Craigmillar's keep.
The moon was down, but myriad stars
Were sparkling in the sky—
“ Behold ! ” he said, and raised his hand—
They seemed to wane and die.

They passed from out the firmament,
Deep darkness fell around—
Darkness, and horror as of hell,
And silence most profound.
No wind, no murmur, breath, nor stir,
'Twas utter blankness all,
As though the face of God were hid,
And heaven were wrapped in pall.

XXV.

“Behold again !” the deep voice said,
And straight arose a spire
Of lurid, red, and dismal light,
Between me and the mountain height,
A peak of wavering fire :
Above it was a kingly crown—
Then sounded in my ear,
“That glorious prize may be thine own !
Nor only that, but honour, power,
Beauty, and love—a matchless dower—
Dominion far and near !

All these await thee, if thy heart
Is tempered like thy steel,
Keen, sharp, and strong, and prompt to strike—
To strike, but not to feel !
That crown was won by valiant Bruce,
He gained it by the blow
That on the slippery altar-steps
Laid the Red Comyn low ;
He won and wore it as a king,
And thou may'st win it now !”

XXVI.

I spoke not, but he heard my thought :—
“ Well done, thou dauntless peer !
I love the brave and venturous will
That knows nor ruth nor fear !
Come, then, I swear by yonder fire—
A sacred oath to me—
That thou shalt sit in Darnley's place
When Darnley dies by thee !
Away that pageant !”—Spire and crown
Shut, like the lightning's leap ;

But overhead a meteor came,
Slow-moving, tinging with its flame
The murky clouds and deep ;
It shed a glare on Arthur's Seat,
It widened like a shield,
And burst, in thunder and in fire,
Above the Kirk-of-Field.

PART THIRD.

PART THIRD.

I.

THAT gaoler hath a savage look—

Methinks I spy a change ;

For three long years, within this room,

That man has been my only groom,

And yet his voice is strange.

He brings me food, he smoothes my bed,

Obedient to my sign ;

But still his moody eye falls down,

And will not answer mine.

I had the art, in former days,

To win, by short familiar phrase,

The rudest hearts alive,—

To bring the wildest to my side,
And force them in the battle-tide
Like thorough fiends to strive.
When Warden, I have rode alone,
Without a single spear to back,
The Marches through, although I knew
That spies were hovering on my track ;
I've passed into the midst of clans
So fierce and wild, that undismayed
They would have risen, sword in hand,
Had the Queen's standard been displayed ;
But never did I meet with one,
Trooper or jackman, groom or knave,
But to the ready fearless call
A frank and fearless answer gave.

II.

This fellow scowls as if in hate.
I've marked upon his brow a scar,
More like the hideous galley-brand
Than any wound from broil or war.

Either he is, in mind and sense,
Far duller than a Lothian boor,
Or there's a plot against my life,
And he's the man to make it sure !
I never hear him at the door,
When fumbling with his heavy keys,
But something warns me to beware,
Reminding me that sounds like these
Were heard by Rothsay, Scotland's heir,
In Falkland's dungeon deep ;
When, mad with famine and despair,
He started from his sleep,
To see the butchers usher in
That terrible repast,
The black bull's head, the awful sign
Of death to follow fast !
Slave that he is ! I've strength enough
To brain him at a blow :
But Danish laws, they say, are hard ;
And scarcely might a man in ward
Deal with his gaoler so.

And yet, if treason dares to come
And bare the murderous knife,
Not craven-like nor unavenged
Shall Bothwell yield his life !

III.

Is this indeed a warning voice
That croaks within my ear ?
Or is it guilt that frames the thought,
And fashions it to fear ?
I'd have it so—I'll so believe !
These terrors are no more
Than the wild blasts that conscience drives ;
And though they shake me sore,
I'll hold them empty, vain, and false,
Nor so demean my place
As tremble at a clown's approach,
Or deign to watch his face !

IV.

Come—I will far away from hence—
I cannot tarry here :

Whate'er the penance, I must forth,
And quit this dungeon drear !
Man lives not for the single point
That marks the passing time ;
He lives in thoughts and memories
Of glory or of crime.
And I will back—and bravely back,
To that tremendous night
When the whole state of Scotland reeled,
And Darnley took his flight,
Borne on the wings of that red blast,
Whose fell volcano-roar
Shook the dark city to its base,
And bade it sleep no more.
That which I did, nor shrunk to do,
I may at least recall ;
If spectres rise from out the grave,
I dare to face them all !

V.

High mirth there was in Holyrood,
As fitted nuptial scene,

For on that day Sebastian wed
The favourite of the Queen.
All Scotland's nobles graced the feast,
And merrily went round the jest,
Though some had secrets in their breast
Enough to mar their sport.
But in a time when all men lied,
Nor trusted neighbour by their side,
Deceit was more than justified ;
And, truly, of that Court,
I doubt if there was any there
Who showed in face or mien a care,
Save Mary. But her cheek was pale,
Sad was her smile at jest or tale ;
And though she strove to bear her part,
She could not so devise,
But that the anguish of her heart
Came glistening to her eyes.

VI.

Yes, when she looked upon the pair
So fondly placed together there,

Loving and loved, without a thought
Beyond their present bliss and joy,
All hope, all trust, all happiness,
All faith without alloy,
I saw her strive to hide her tears—
I am not gentler than my peers ;
Nor could I, in the general case,
Divine why women weep and wail,
But gazing on Queen Mary's face,
I saw the cause, and could not fail.
She thought her of the marriage-feast
When Darnley was the chosen groom,
When, trusting to his vows and faith,
She gave herself, in beauty's bloom.
When she was radiant as the bride,
And he was, as the lover, gay ;
Alas ! there rolled an awful tide
Between that time and this to-day !
Short interval ; yet where was he,
The partner of her bed and throne,
The chief of all her chivalry ?
A wretched leper, and alone !

Stricken, and sick, and ill at ease,
Worn out with base debaucheries,
Her lord once more was nigh ;
Broken in body and in mind—
A wretch, who paradise resigned,
To wallow in a sty !

VII.

How she endured him, after all
His foulness and his insolence,
Puzzles my mind—but let it fall !
God gave to woman gentler sense
And sweeter temper than to man ;
And she will bear, like penitence,
A load that makes the other ban.
Saint-like she tarried by his side,
And soothed his torment day by day ;
And though her grief she could not hide,
No anger did her look betray.
Now, in the midst of mirth and song,
Her loving nature did not yield,

And every moment seemed too long
That kept her from the Kirk-of-Field.
Early she gave the wonted sign
In token that the feast was done ;
Her place was then by Darnley's bed,
Till the late revelry begun.
And I, like her, had counted time,
And might not longer tarry there ;
For the wild impulse to a crime
Hath all the urgency of despair.
I knew her errand, and my own !
I knew them both but far too well—
Hers was the thorny path to heaven,
And mine the road that leads to hell !

VIII.

Well I remember how my heart
Beat as I oped the postern-door ;
My foot upon the threshold stayed,
I scarce had power to venture o'er !
The night was dark ; a heavy mist
Came creeping upward from the sea,—

“ Who waits there ? Bolton—Talla—hist ! ”

And straight they glided up to me.

“ Is all prepared ?——speak soft and low.”

“ All’s done ; beyond the walls they wait.”

“ And Ormiston, where lingers he ?

He was not wont to be so late.”

“ He tarries for you. But, my Lord,

Some hidden treachery we dread ;

Two muffled men are on the watch,

They passed us by with stealthy tread.

No aid has come from Morton yet,

Despite the promise that he gave ;

I searched the fields and orchard round,

But all was silent as the grave.”

“ Why then, our secret is our own :

Far better that they are not there.

As for the twain you speak of—tush !

Maskers or galliards—never care !

Give me your hand. Why, Hay, ’tis cold !

No flinching now ; the die is cast.

Nay, man ! be resolute and bold ;

To-morrow, and the danger’s past.

What brave young heart but would be fain
To share in such a venturous deed ?
Away then ; let's to Ormiston :
Tread softly as you go—take heed !”

IX.

We found him graithed in steel array—
O, often yet I think of him !
The strongest warrior of his day,
A giant both in thewes and limb.
He was my friend, my father's too ;
But he is dead—nor only he,
For the black gibbet was the doom
Of every man who stood by me !
Well, well ! God sain them—sain them all !
If what they died for was a crime,
Death was atonement : for the rest
I'll answer in the coming time,
As I must answer.

“ Ormiston ! ”

“ Welcome, Lord Earl, but not too soon ;

I've waited here an hour and more,
And cursed the coming of the moon.
Thanks to the mist, the Borderer's friend,
We shall not see her face to-night ;
I never rode a foray yet
When I had comfort from her light.
So Morton has not sent his men ?
I'm glad on't, Earl ! 'Twere shame, I swear,
That fifty jackmen should be brought
To see one stripling vault in air."

X.

I stood that night in Darnley's room,
Above the chamber charged with death ;
At every sound that rose below
There was a catching in my breath.
The aspect of the boy was sad,
For he was weak, and wrung with pain ;
Weary he lay upon the bed,
From which he never rose again.
I saw his brow so pale and damp,
I saw his cheek so thin and spare—

I've seen it often since in dreams—
O wherefore did I seek him there ?
He lay, indeed, a dying man,
His minutes numbered, marked, and spanned ;
With every ticking of the clock
There fell a priceless grain of sand.
Yet over him an angel bent,
And soothed his pain, and wiped his brow—
So fair, so kind, so innocent,
That all hell's tortures to me now
Could scarce be worse than what I felt
Within that thrice-accursed room !
No heart so hard that will not melt
When love stands weeping o'er the tomb.
O had I hellebore for that—
That one damn'd hour!—I'd count me blest ;
So would I banish from my couch
The direst phantom of unrest !

XI.

Time trickled on. I knew 'twas done,
When Paris entered with the key—

I'd listened for his foot, as one
Upon the rack might hail the tread
Of the grim gaoler of the dead,
Yet loathsome was his face to me !
He looked a murderer ; not for hate,
Malice, or wrong, or other cause,
By which the devil, or his mate,
Tempt man to spurn his Maker's laws—
But from that hideous appetite,
That lust for blood, that joy in sin,
That shames the instinct of the wolf,
So hellish is the heart within.
Let no man seek to gain his end
By felon means ! I never felt
So like a slave, as when he passed,
And touched the key beneath his belt !
For in his glance I read the thought—
“ Lord Bothwell ! ever from this hour,
Though you be great, and I am nought,
Your life and fame are in my power ! ”
Ah ! shame, that I should now recall
The meaner feelings of that time,

The splinters and the accidents
That flash from every deed of crime !
Shame, that a face like his should rise
To gibber at me even now,
To scare me with his hateful eyes,
And beckon from the gulf below !
What reck's it how a caitiff ends ?
If Murray paid him with a cord,
Why, let his spectre haunt the friends
Who did not deem him worth the sword !
No more of that !—The Queen arose,
And we, her nobles, stood aloof
Until she parted from her spouse,
And then we left the fated roof.

XII.

“ Back, back to Holyrood ! away ! ”
Then torches flashed, and yeomen came,
And round the royal litter closed
A gleaming zone of ruddy flame.
I have slight memory of that walk—
Argyle, I think, spoke earnestly

On state affairs, but of his talk
Not any word remains with me.
We came to Holyrood ; and soon
A gush of music filled the hall :
The dance was set ; the long saloon
Glowed as in time of carnival.
O hateful to me was the sound,
And doubly hateful was the light !
I could not bear to look around,
I longed to plunge into the night.
A low dull boom was in mine ear,
A surging as of waters pent ;
And the strained sense refused to hear
The words of passing merriment.
What if that Babel should be stilled,
Smote dumb, by one tremendous knell ?
What if the air above were filled
With clanging from the clocks of hell ?
Yet waited I till all was o'er ;
The bride withdrew, the masque was done :
And as I left the postern-door,
Dully the palace bell struck, One !

XIII.

I heard a sermon long ago,
Wherein the preacher strove to show
That guiltiness in high or low
Hath the like touch of fear ;
And that the knight who sallies forth,
Bent on an action of unworth,
Though he be duke or belted earl,
Feels the same tremor as the churl
Who steals his neighbour's gear.
I held his words for idle talk,
And cast them from my view ;
But, in that awful midnight walk,
I felt the man spake true.

XIV.

I heard the echo of my foot,
As up the Canongate I sped,
Distinct, as though in close pursuit
Some spy kept even with my tread.
Or did I run, or did I pause,
That sound was ever bickering near ;

And though I guessed full well the cause,
I could not free myself from fear.
I almost stumbled in the dark
Upon a houseless, vagrant hound,
And his sharp snarl, and sudden bark,
Made my heart leap, and pulses bound.
Wherever there were lights on high,
Methought there stood some watcher pale—
Thin shadows seemed to flitter by,
I heard low voices mourn and wail.
And I could swear that once I saw
A phantom gliding by the place
Where then I stood. I shook with awe—
The face was like my mother's face,
When last I saw her on her bier !
Are there such things ? or does the dread
Of coming evil craze our fear,
And so bring up the sheeted dead ?
I cannot tell. But this I know,
That rather than endure again
Such hideous thoughts, I'd fight the foe,

And reckon with them, blow for blow,
Though I were one, and they were ten !

XV.

I passed beyond the city wall ;
No light there was in hut or bield,
I scarce could find the narrow lane
That led me to the Kirk-of-Field.
Three men were speeding from the door ;
They ran against me in the way—
“Who’s that?” “’Tis I!” “Lord Bothwell? Back,
Back, back—my Lord ! make no delay !
The doors are locked, the match is lit—
A moment more, and all is done—
Let’s ’void the ground !” “He sleeps then sound?”
“Within that house shall waken none !”
Shortly we paused. I strained my sight
To trace the outline of the pile ;
But neither moon nor stars gave light,
And so we waited for a while.

XVI.

Down came the rain with steady pour,
It splashed the pools among our feet ;
Each minute seemed in length an hour,
As each went by, yet uncomplete.
“ Hell ! should it fail, our plot is vain !
Bolton—you have mislaid the light !
Give me the key—I’ll fire the train,
Though I be partner of his flight ! ”
“ Stay, stay, my Lord ! you shall not go !
’Twere madness now to near the place ;
The soldiers’ fuses burn but slow ;
Abide, abide a little space !
There’s time enough ”——

XVII.

He said no more,
For at the instant flashed the glare,
And with a hoarse infernal roar
A blaze went up and filled the air !
Rafters, and stones, and bodies rose
In one quick gush of blinding flame,

And down, and down, amidst the dark,
Hurtling on every side they came.
Surely the devil tarried near,
To make the blast more fierce and fell,
For never pealed on human ear
So dreadful and so dire a knell.
The heavens took up the earth's dismay,
The thunder bellowed overhead ;
Steep called to steep. Away, away !—
Then fear fell on me, and I fled ;
For I was dazzled and amazed—
A fire was flashing in my brain—
I hasted like a creature crazed,
Who strives to overrun his pain.
I took the least-frequented road,
But even there arose a hum ;
Lights showed in every vile abode,
And far away I heard the drum.
Roused was the city, late so still ;
Burghers, half clad, ran hurrying by,
Old crones came forth, and scolded shrill,
Men shouted challenge and reply.

Yet no one dared to cross my path,
My hand was on my dagger's hilt ;
Fear is as terrible as wrath,
And vengeance not more fierce than guilt.
I would have stricken to the heart
Whoever should have stopped me then ;
None saw me from the palace part,
None saw me enter it again.
Ah ! but I heard a whisper pass,
It thrilled me as I reached the door—
“ Welcome to thee, the knight that was,
The felon now for evermore ! ”

PART FOURTH.

PART FOURTH.

I.

QUEEN Guenever, that lady high,
Loved Lancelot of the Lake,
And sweet Isolde was fain to die
For gentle Tristram's sake :
And aye their story charms the ear,
Despite the taint of shame,
And lordlings list, and ladies hear,
Nor ever think to blame.
Yet Arthur was the goodliest knight
Of all the Table Round,
And stout King Marc, in stubborn fight,
Was ever foremost found.
Why is it that the ancient song
Should thus have power to thrill ?

That sin, and faithlessness, and wrong,
Should wake emotion still ?
Ah ! Love, so it be passion'd love,
However frail and blind,
Will yet on earth, if not above,
A gentle judgment find.

II.

In the old tales of chivalry
There lies more truth than priests allow ;
Valour, and strength, and courtesy,
Have power to make the haughtiest bow.
The knight who by his single arm
Could free a lady from duress,
And break the fell magician's charm,
Had claim upon her loveliness :
Although the daughter of a king,
She might not spurn his homage fair ;
And proud was she in listed ring,
To see him with her colours there.

Rare thoughts are these for one disgraced,
A slave in body, racked in soul !—
My blazon has been long erased,
My name struck off the knightly roll !
But what of that ? The time has been
When I was highest of the high—
Yea, was the husband of a Queen ;
And so they shall not pass me by.
Good men and brave may be forgot,
The tomb may hide their dust and fame,
But while there breathes on earth a Scot,
He'll hear, at least, of Bothwell's name !

III.

Yet, when the awful deed was done,
And Mary's burst of grief was by,
Of all who stood around the throne,
Was none in closer trust than I.
My front was calm, my speech was clear,
I did not overact my part,

Nor feign a sorrow, too severe,
For one I never loved at heart :
Intent I seemed to find and trace
The bloody authors of the crime ;
But rumour hath a headlong pace,
And would not tarry for my time.
Whispers arose, not loud, but strong,
That I was privy to the deed ;
The rabble, when I passed along,
Regarded me with sullen heed ;
A madman paced the streets by night,
Invoking vengeance from on high,
Till the scared women, in affright,
Believed they heard a spirit cry.
Each Sabbath-day the pulpits rung
With texts on murder ill-concealed,
And pictures on the Cross were hung
Of him who died at Kirk-of-Field.

IV.

My name was bruited.—Well I know
Who set the bloodhounds on my track ;

But Morton, though my deadliest foe,
Dared not, as then, to cheer the pack.
Had I been such a knave as he,
I might at once have eased my breath,
And made my name for ever free,
By charging him with Darnley's death.
Ay, without falsehood in my heart !
For, when I went at break of day,
To search the ruins, far apart
The unscathed corpse of Darnley lay.
No mark of fire was on the dead,
Unsing'd his cloak of velvet fine ;
If he were murdered as he fled,
It was not done by me or mine !
And none save Douglas knew the hour
When the old roof should whirl in air ;
He swore to aid me with his power—
It may be that his men were there.

v.

But rumour is a reckless fire,
Which, kindled once, is sure to spread,

And, raging in its frantic ire,
 Spare not the living or the dead.
An ember dropped upon the waste,
 Swells to a blaze that wraps the hill,
And onward rush the flames in haste,
 Ascending, striding, bickering still ;
They reach the wood, they spare it not,—
 The forest roars and crashes down,—
The red surge breaks on tower and cot,
 Homestead and village, church and town.
And rumour did not spare a name
 That should have been from tarnish free ;
No saint in heaven was less to blame
 For wretched Darnley's death than she !
Fling forth a lie amongst the crowd,
 Let but the preachers vouch 'tis true—
And innocence may buy her shroud,
 And guilt go forth in garments new !
They said she did not mourn him long—
 What cause had she to mourn at all ?
His life had been a course of wrong,
 A hideous shadow on her wall.

VI.

Why mourn? Because the man was dead
Who brought his ruffians to her room,
And held her struggling, while they shed
The life-blood of her favourite groom?
Who trafficked with her darkest foes,
Heaped insult on her and despite,
Fled from the Court to herd with those
Whose baseness was his foul delight?
Why, I have heard old Knox protest,
Men should not mourn for those they love,
Since earthly mourning is, at best,
Defiance to the will above.
He cited David, who arose
And washed his face and tasted bread,
Things he omitted, in his woes,
Until he knew his child was dead.
And so, because in quietness
Her secret soul she did possess,
Because she did not feign despair,
Nor beat her breast, nor rend her hair,
Nor give superfluous sorrow breath—

Because no vain and false parade,
Or frantic show of grief was made,
They taxed her with her husband's death !

VII.

Ha, ha ! Their rancour was my shield,
A buckler between me and shame ;
For what belief could Mary yield
To miscreants who abused her name ?
She, in her perfect innocence,
Despised the foul insulting lie,
That, without semblance of pretence,
Had swollen into a common cry.
They dared to charge her—her, their Queen—
With guilt so monstrous of its kind,
That, granting she had only been
In knowledge of the deed designed,
The gates of heaven had shut for aye
Against her penitence and prayer,
Angels had loathed her in their sky,
And left her to her soul's despair !

VIII.

Yea, men had loathed her ! I myself—
The devil's bondsman, though alive,
Whom not for charity nor pelf
The meanest priest that crawls would shrive—
I would not, though she brought a crown,
Have ta'en a murderess to my bed ;
The Borgia won such wide renown
As well might warn a pillowed head !—
But, fie on me, to mix the name
Of one so tainted and so vile,
With hers, the pure and spotless Dame
Who tarries in Lochleven's isle !
Her noble soul, that knew no taint,
Was far too trusting and sincere ;
She was, in purity, the saint,
With all that makes the woman dear.
And when I pass before the Throne,
To reckon for my deeds on earth ;
When every secret crime is known,
And every thought that gave them birth ;

I'll answer truly for my Queen,
What she, in error, did for me ;
And, though a gulf lie broad between,
I'll vouch her, as an angel, free !

IX.

Yet who accused me ? Not my peers ;
They, one and all, were dumb as death—
'Twere shame to think that doubts or fears
Could make them draw a bated breath !
If some were mingled in the plot,
And far too well the secret knew,
Yet more there were who loved me not,
Brave lords and valiant, tried and true.
Boyd—Seton—Herries—none stood forth,
Nor any knight of fame and worth ;
Only old Lennox, half distraught
With sorrow for his slaughtered son,
Gave utterance to the people's thought,
And craved that justice should be done.

Ready was I to stand the test,
To bide the sentence of the law ;
Its terrors did not mar my rest,
Nor make me thrill with guilty awe.
For Morton stood beside me then,
And Lethington was with me too,
And even Murray sent his men,
To witness that my cause was true.
Right hastily the ermined lords
Pronounced me innocent and free :
And well they might ! Four thousand swords
Were there to make defence for me !
Then, hardier yet, I caused proclaim—
If any dared impeach my name,
Or charge me with a murder stain
Upon my hand, for Darnley slain,
So that he were of like degree,
He had my challenge, fair and free—
In guarded lists, or open heath,
I'd meet him as a knight,
And do stark battle to the death—
Might God defend the right !

X.

O liar that I was, and mad,
In such wild manner to blaspheme !
Not mine the faith that Morton had,
Who held salvation but a dream.
Never I doubted, from the first,
The judgment of a God on high ;
And if I be by Him accursed,
I know what waits me when I die.
I will not stupify my soul—
Wretch as I am—with false belief ;
Or think that death must close the whole
Long weary tale of shame and grief.
How could I hope to win in fight—
The utterer of so foul a prayer ?
How 'scape the overwhelming might
I had invoked to crush me there ?

XI.

Still, no one came to lift my gage ;
The law declared me free from taint.

What cared I for the preachers' rage ?
I let them chafe without restraint.
The burghers might believe their tale,
But dared not mutter it again—
Too many spears from Liddesdale
Were daily moving in my train.
On slight pretext the borderer draws,
But not so quickly sheathes his brand,
And swords can tame as well as laws,
They're ever readier to the hand.
Enough for me that I was clear ;
I thought to let the storm pass by ;
For railing soon fatigues the ear,
When no one will vouchsafe reply.

XII.

And I had much to meditate.
Darnley no longer stopped my way ;
The Queen was free to choose a mate,
I must not, like a fool, delay.
For princes, ay, and kings would come
To sue for favour from her eyes,

And all the craft of France and Rome
Would work for such a glorious prize.
Then how could I, a simple peer,
Whose name was scarce in Europe known,
Presume to mix or interfere,
With royal tenders for a throne ?
Love levels all ! That faith had I ;
Yea, and by heaven, true love was mine,
Though it was marred by villany,
As sullied water tainteth wine !
I knew the legend framed of old,
And ever to my heart it came—
He must be desperate and bold
Who seeks to win a royal dame !

XIII.

Yet all unequal was our lot :
She was a widow, I was wed—
Poor Lady Jane ! I loved her not,
Yet never wished her with the dead.
She was a vixen from her birth,
Ready with tears, of temper keen,

But though she often stirred my mirth,
She never waked a touch of spleen.
Divorce was easy. She and I,
In mutual weariness, could part,
Without a ceremonial sigh,
Or fiction of an aching heart.
But Mary—how would she receive
A suit so strange and bold as mine ?
Had I but ventured to believe
That worship at so fair a shrine,
So mutely offered and so long,
Could not, at least, unnoticed be,
My courage then had been more strong,
My speech more unrestrained and free.

XIV.

Often I strove to speak my mind,
As often did I swerve aside ;
For, though her eyes were ever kind,
She never lost her queenly pride.
Her nature was too great and high
To listen to a lover's vows,

Ere on her cheek the tears were dry
 She gave to her departed spouse.
And therefore, in uncertain mood,
 Aimless, perplexed, I lingered on,
Until one day, at Holyrood,
 My path was crossed by Lethington.
He met me with a meaning smile
 That almost deepened to a sneer;
I knew the man was steeped in wile,
 And yet I thought his words sincere.

XV.

“Lord Earl,” he said, “in days of old,
As I have heard the story told,
There reigned a king in Lydian land,
 Who had a beauteous wife;
But kings right seldom understand
The worth of that which they possess,
And this weak monarch’s shamelessness
 Cost him his crown and life.
I need not now the tale rehearse,

For still it lives in minstrel's verse ;
This only shall I say,
That he who 'venged the lady's wrong
Was far too wise to tarry long,
Before he claimed the sway."

XVI.

"You speak in riddles!" "Surely no :
Methinks my meaning should be clear :
Look but around—where breathes the foe
Whose malice you have cause to fear ?"
"Ay, but the Queen ! 'Twere doubly base
For me to press, as yet, my claim ;
To urge her to her own disgrace,
And taint her honour and her fame.
I stand suspected ; even here
Men deem me guilty of the sin ;
And though their tongues are bound by fear,
I know what thoughts they keep within.
England abhors me. England's Queen
Detests the man she could not buy :

Yes ! there had less of rancour been,
Were I a caitiff and a spy !
Now—say that I advanced my suit,
And Mary yielded me her hand,
Would not rebellion start to foot,
And treason rage throughout the land ?
Her foes could find no better proof
Of all that slander dares to say,
And honest men would stand aloof,
And friends draw from her in dismay !”

XVII.

“ Yea—does your foresight reach so far ?
Men deemed, Lord Bothwell, you were born
Beneath a rash and fiery star
That ever prompted you to scorn
All prudent counsel. You have worn
Right well the mask ; but now I see,
You are as wise in policy
As swift in action—list to me.
How stand you at the present hour ?
The first in place, the first in power !

No other noble in the land
Hath such a wide and strong command.
Singly you might defy them all,
If they were leagued to work your fall ;
And yet the first and greatest Lords
Are pledged your honour to maintain,
And they are ready with their swords
To prove they did not swear in vain.
What you have risked for them they know ;
All were approvers of the deed ;
Nor is there one so mean and low
As leave you in the hour of need,—
So it is now ; but who dare say
To-morrow shall be like to-day ?
A common danger keeps us bound,
That past, the league will sunder quite,
New foes will rise as from the ground,
New perils hover into sight.
Oh, then take heed, lest, being strong,
You count too much upon your power ;
Occasion never proffers long,
It comes and passes in an hour !”

XVIII.

“Truce with thy proverbs, man ! they fill
With sound, and nothing else, mine ear—
Speak of the Queen, her royal will
Must surely count for something here ?”
“My Lord—this Scottish crown of ours,
August and ancient though it be,
Doth yet confer but stinted powers,
And is but royal in degree.
He whom the nobles hail as king
Becomes the foremost of them all ;
He passes first in listed ring,
In battle, banquet, bower, or hall.
He leads our armies to the field,
The laws are his to guard and wield ;
And yet 'tis widely known,
Without the concert of his peers,
No Scottish king, these thousand years,
Hath ever kept the throne.
Is it not time for concert now ?
The crown is on a woman's brow

The people, by the preachers led,
Heap insults on her royal head—
She stands alone without a mate
On whom her arm might lean—
Why sleep the guardians of the State?
Their voice is strong, their powers are great;
Let them direct the Queen!"

XIX.

"Thanks, Maitland, thanks! I see thy aim—
By heaven, it shall be done!
If Scotland's peers support my claim,
The prize is almost won!
Ay, and who dare impeach their choice?
Let me but gain the nobles' voice!
About it straight! Let Morton sign,
Huntley and Cassilis, Crawford too—
Their fortunes are compact with mine;
When they stand forward, not a few
For love, or dread, or shame will join.
Ruthven will follow, nothing loth:
Errol, Argyle—I have them both.

And hark'ye—sound the bishops, man !

Each reverend name is worth a score—

Place old St Andrews in the van,

He'll bring us Orkney, Ross, and more.

Not my advancement, friend, alone

Depends on what we do :

If Bothwell ever mounts the throne,

Why, thou shalt prosper too !”

XX.

They gave it me—that fatal Band ;

I held their honour in my hand.

Lords, whose great names were widely known

Ere Malcolm Canmore filled the throne ;

Chieftains, who ruled their broad domains

As freely as a monarch reigns,

Around whose banners reared on high

Would flock our Scottish chivalry ;

Grave prelates, who, in former days,

Before the Church was rent in twain,

Had won the people's worthless praise,

And bore the crozier not in vain—

The great, the noble, wise, and free,
They, one and all, were bound to me !
No miser ever clutched his gold
More keenly than did I the scroll ;
I conned it over, fold by fold,
I weighed each name upon the roll.

XXI.

“And now,” thought I, “though fortune change,
My place is firm, my seat secure ;
Yea, let her, like a falcon, range
In wilful flight o’er moss and moor !
Nothing, I feel, can shake me now ;
The strength of Scotland backs my claim.
'Tis but the loosing of a vow,
A parting from a wearied dame ;
A wooing, neither hard nor long,
For Mary cannot but comply ;
And then—the child was never strong,
Sickness may smite him, and he’ll die—
Infants die easy—and I reign !
Ha, ha ! Elizabeth may fret,

And Cecil vex his restless brain :

I'll make them know me better yet !

For let them dare to disallow

My claim of right—and, by my head,

Before a year goes by, they'll trow

That Bruce has risen from the dead !”

XXII.

There was a knocking. “’Sdeath ! what fool

Comes here to interrupt me now ?

Ha ! Ormiston, my trusty friend—

Welcome,—but why that gloomy brow ?

Be joyful, man !—all’s done, all’s sure.”—

“What’s done? you’re not her husband yet?”

“No—but my claim is made secure ;

This Band, to which the Lords have set

Their names and seals”—“Is like the rest,

Parchment and ink—I know them well—

Good faith hath been a stranger guest

Since Scottish nobles learned to spell.

Your own brave father woo'd a Queen—
This Mary's mother. I have seen
The letters written by her hand,
Far clearer than that doubtful Band,
With promise, oath, and token too.
He deemed himself secure, like you ;
Yet died he in a foreign land.
O, never rest your faith on words ;
Pens are for priests ; trust nought but swords !
Clerks torture language, to conceal
Their inward thoughts, and cheat the eye ;
There's honesty in naked steel,
It rings too sharply for a lie !”

XXIII.

“ A cheerful counsellor art thou !
What next ? If nothing worse portend,
Relax the rigour of thy brow,
And speak to me as friend with friend.
Why—still thou lookest stern and strange—
What is it that thou hast to tell ?”

“ Listen and mark. The Laird of Grange,
Kirkaldy, whom we know full well
To be as resolute a knight
As lives within this Scottish land—
No better ever ruled a fight,
No wiser ever held command—
Accuses you in open day
Of Darnley’s murder !” “ Dares he so ?
And was there none his tongue to stay,
No hand to deal a dagger-blow ?”

XXIV.

“ On even field I would not fear
To meet Kirkaldy spear to spear ;
But shame it were to touch his life
Through vassal’s dirk or yeoman’s knife !
No idle pampered stripling he—
A man of mark and dignity !
He can array, at trumpet-call,
The Leslie and the Melvilles all ;
Though but a knight of slender strain,
No Lord can summon such a train.

The burgher carles who turn aside,
Or scowl with angry brow,
When peers and bishops proudly ride,
To him will bend and bow.
Ay, and the preachers, who detest
Whatever soldiers love the best,
They, who will rail you by the hour,
Submit to him and own his power :
He guides their council, wields their will,
He bids them clamour or be still ;
Of evil omen is the day
That brings Kirkaldy to the fray !”

XXV.

“So then, that champion of misrule
Aspires to measure swords with me ?
He comes too late ! I were a fool
To match with one of his degree.
My challenge stood unanswered long,
He might have offered when ’twas new ;
I’ll not be baited by the throng,
And bide his knightship’s leisure too !”

XXVI.

“ Despise him not ; his plans are laid,
His friends are numbered and arrayed ;
On you alone the taint they throw.
Nay, hear me out !—’Tis childish now
To wince at words—You bear the charge,
Whilst saintly Morton walks at large ;
He’s safe, whoever may prevail,
Within the Congregation’s pale.
Some scapegoat truly there must be,
To carry sin, and you are he !
They have brave watchwords ! First, ‘The Queen’—
 They’re wondrous loyal now, I swear—
And next, ‘ The Prince ;’ for ’tis foreseen
 His babyhood may lack some care.
The sire’s removed, the son survives,
 You’re not his foster-father yet ;
There’s peril, sir, for infant lives,
 When crowns are on their cradles set !
So say the people.”

XXVII.

“ Let them prate !

The sordid knaves may hoot and groan ;
Not theirs to overrule my fate,

Or bar my passage to the throne !

Let twenty knights of greater worth

Than this Kirkaldy venture forth,

Of what avail would be their stand

Against the nobles of the land ?

I tell thee, man, their names are here ;

They urge my marriage with the Queen.”

“ Hath she consented ? ” “ No—’tis clear

Some little space must intervene :

She has not thrown her weeds aside.”

“ She knows your purpose ? ” “ She may guess.”

“ What ! do you count upon a bride

Before her lips have answered, Yes ?

Never spoke I with courtly dame,

But women are throughout the same ;

The lowest lass in Teviotdale

That goes a-milking with her pail,

Is mistress of her heart and hand,
And will not yield them at command.
Lovers must bend, and fawn, and sue
 To maids of high or low degree ;
The wooing may be rough, 'tis true,
 Yet, nathless, wooing there must be.
That parchment no assurance gives—
 I see not how it aids your aim.
You are not free : your Countess lives ;
 She may refuse to waive her claim.
Come now—be frank with me, my Lord !
 Something of statesman's craft I know—
Who brought you this ? for, by my word,
 I hold him less your friend than foe !”

XXVIII.

“ ’Twas Lethington !” “ Why, he's in league
 With Morton and Kirkaldy too !
The busiest spider of intrigue
 That ever simple Scotland knew !
This web is of his weaving, then ?
 We'll burst it yet ! The Queen's away ?”

“She passed with Huntley and his men
To Stirling Castle yesterday.”
“When comes she back?” “To-morrow.” “Good!
Now listen—here, in Holyrood,
You cannot gain the Queen’s consent ;
Within a week, the storm, now pent,
Will break in fury on your head.
The Commons, by Kirkaldy led,
Will thunder at the palace gate ;
And, were you innocent as Knox,
When captured at St Andrews rocks,
Your friends must leave you to your fate.

XXIX.

“Be ruled by me—forestall the time !
Surprise is fair in love or war ;
A little urging is no crime—
Take Mary with you to Dunbar !
Thanks to the knave who brought me word,
Kirkaldy set us on our guard :
We have a thousand horsemen here,
From Crichton and from Teviotdale,

Men who were never known to fail,
All ready, armed with jack and spear.
Around Dunbar the waters sweep ;
 Meet place for meditation lone,
When he who owns the castle-keep
 Is host and lover, both in one !
Take, too, the Band ; it may suffice
To still some doubts, should such arise
'Twere pity that her Royal Grace
 Saw not that dutiful demand !—
Now, I have told you all the case ;
 Lord Bothwell, will you grasp my hand ?
Nay, never shrink—'tis now too late ;
 To-morrow must the deed be done ;
You'll find me at the western gate,
 With all our men equipped, by one.
I know the road ; we'll meet them there,
 Then hey o'er meadow, heath, and hill !
Come now, be brave !—All bids us fair—
 Wilt thou do this ?” “ Your hand—I will !”

PART FIFTH.



PART FIFTH.

I.

ASCENSION morn ! I hear the bells
Ring from the village far away :
How solemnly that music tells
The mystic story of the day !
Fainter and fainter come the chimes,
As though they melted into air,
Like voices of the ancient times,
Like echoes of ascending prayer !
So sweet and gentle sound they yet,
That I, who never bend the knee,
Can listen on, and half forget
That heaven's bright door is shut for me.
Ring on, ye bells ! Let others throng
Before the blessed rood to pray ;

Let them have comfort in the song
That celebrates this holy day.
Ring on for them ! I hear you well,
But cannot lift my thoughts on high ;
The dreary mists that rise from hell
Come thick between me and the sky !

II.

O God, I wish that I were dead !
That I had died long, long ago,
With but such sin upon my head
As men of dull temptations know !
We cleave to life, yet never deem
That life may be a curse and snare—
Far better with the dead to dream,
Than wake in torture and despair.
O yes, I can be humble now !
Sometimes my mood is stern and wild,
Yet often I must stoop my brow,
And weep as weakly as a child.
Defiance burns within me yet,
But none are near me to defy ;

I cannot palter or forget,
Or cheat my conscience with a lie.
I have shed blood, and rued it sore,
Because it was not knightly done ;
Yet were that all my guilt—no more—
It well might brook comparison
With deeds that, in the preachers' eyes,
Appear a righteous sacrifice.
They own no saints ; else, well I ween,
A saint had Norman Leslie been :
Norman, that fiery youth and bold,
Who forced his way to Beatoun's hold,
And saw, unmoved, the murderer's knife
Let out the Primate's throbbing life.
Though private feud, not holy zeal,
Set Norman forward with his steel,
Yet his was styled a godly deed,
Because he made a bishop bleed.
Witchcraft has charms to daze the sight ;
Strange glamour has religion too :
It makes the wrong appear the right,
The false as worthy as the true !

The ten commandments dwindle down,
In case of pious need, to nine ;
Murder no more provokes a frown,
'Tis justified by texts divine !

III.

Away, away with thoughts like these !
Take them, ye winds, and overwhelm them, seas !
For other memories haunt me. Yes ;
As greater billows drown the less,
So one dark surge within my breast
Roars up, and overwhelms the rest.
It might be foul, it might be wrong
To slay the man I hated long ;
But O, what mercy from above
Can he entreat who strikes at love ?

IV.

Methinks I can recall the scene,
That bright and sunny day ;

The Pentlands in their early green
Like giant warders lay.
Upon the bursting woods below
The pleasant sunbeams fell ;
Far off, one streak of lazy snow
Yet lingered in a dell.
The westlin' winds blew soft and sweet,
The meads were fair to see ;
Yet went I not the spring to greet
Beneath the trysting-tree.

v.

For blades were glistening in the light,
And morions flashing clear :
A thousand men in armour bright
Were there with sword and spear.
A thousand men as brave and stout
As ever faced a foe,
Or stemmed the roaring battle-rout
When fiercest in its flow.

But cold and cheerless was their mien,
And faint their welcome then :—
“ Why, Ormiston ! what sullen fiend
Hath so possessed the men ?
They look like images in steel,
Not vassals prompt and true :
Think you they know or guess the work,
And will they bear us through ? ”

VI.

“ Fear not for that ! No single knave
Will fail you at your need ;
Were it to gallows or to grave,
They'd follow where I lead.
Give but the signal for the south,
Or 'gainst the townsmen here,
And, fast enough, from every mouth
Will burst a deafening cheer !
Nothing need they but action, sir,
To make them fierce and fain :

Last night their blood began to stir ;
'Twas pity to refrain !
A blow or two on yonder crew
Right well had been bestowed !
But more anon : the day wears on ;
'Tis time to take the road.
Hay, bid the trumpets sound the march ;
Go, Bolton, to the van ;
Young Niddrie follows with the rear ;
Set forward, every man !”

VII.

“But what hath chanced ? The streets are clear ;
I saw no gathering throng :
No sound of tumult reached my ear,
Now, as I passed along.”
“O, sir ! the Edinburgh folk are wise ;
They know the value of disguise !
Short warning give they of the fray,
For they are hounds that do not bay
Until they tear you down ;

But better are we here to-day
Abroad, than in the town.
I knew that danger was at hand,
But deemed it not so nigh ;
Your chance was lost, despite the Band,
Had this one day gone by !
Kirkaldy's friends have laid their plot :
They know our purpose well.
You start—thank God, they ventured not
To sound St Giles's bell !
Then had the craftsmen rushed to arms ;
And ill it were to strive,
With hampered men, against the swarms
Lodged in yon waspish hive !
Had Morton joined them with his might,
Or message come from Mar,
Why, you and I this self-same night
Had lodged within Dunbar ;
Not, as I trust, with royal guest,
At will to entertain,
But with some score of beaten rogues,
Too scared to draw the rein.

The townsfolk can be dangerous foes,
If roused within their den ;
And truly, when it comes to blows,
They bear themselves like men !

VIII.

“ Last night they tried our troopers’ faith ;
And many a can of ale
Was emptied to Queen Mary’s health
By lads of Liddesdale.
Frankly the burghers played the host ;
And all was merry game,
Till one gruff elder of the Kirk
Waxed wrathful at your name.
Short say was his and incomplete,
A Jardine smote him down ;
Then, ’midst the brawl, arose the call
Of ‘ Douglas for the town !’
That cry was ready and designed,
It rung through street, and pealed through wynd,
But Morton was not there.

Yet bear it ever in your mind,
And guard against the stab behind
 When Douglas speaks you fair !
Right glad was I from yonder pack
 Our men unscathed to bring ;
And, when we ride in triumph back,
 Lord Earl, I'll hail thee King !

IX.

“ And, by my soul, the hour has come !
 No doubt or tarrying now !
Mark yonder drifting cloud of dust
 Above the orchard row.
Some thirty spears, not more, are there ;
 I reckon by their sheen :
And yonder rides a knight in mail—
 ’Tis Huntley with the Queen !
Ho, sound a halt ! Go forward you ;
 I’ll follow with my band :
Now, Bothwell, to yourself be true—
 The crown is in your hand !”

X.

True to myself? False—false as hell,

And false to all beside!

Yet what I did was acted well:

The devil was my guide.

For question left I little space;

I spurred across the plain:

I met Queen Mary, face to face,

And took her palfrey's rein.

XI.

“Pardon, my liege, if hot with haste

I fail in homage due!

Too precious is the time to waste;

My care is all for you.

Madam! rebellion rages wide

Within yon luckless town:

The craftsmen in tumultuous tide

To Holyrood sweep down!

‘Fire, fire the chapel!’ is their cry ;

‘No mass—no mumbled prayer !

Hale forth the priests, and let them die :

Down, down with rank Idolatry !

Smite, burn, and do not spare !’

Nay, Madam—never look so pale—

Your friends are safe. I did not fail

To leave a trusty band,

Who, if they cannot clear the street,

Are strong enough for safe retreat ;

And this their strict command—

To make at least the passage good

Of all your train from Holyrood,

To Crichton, my ancestral home,

Where the false villains dare not come.

But you, our Lady and our Queen—

Your safety is my care :

One royal fortress yet remains,

We’ll bring you bravely there.

I hold your castle of Dunbar,

The strongest keep equipped for war

Within the Lothians wide :

No other place is half so sure ;
There shall you rest in peace, secure—
 Say, Madam, will you ride ?
Short is the space for parley now,
 The road beset may be ;
But though we hew our passage through,
 We'll bear your Highness free !
Come, Huntley ! we await your word :
 What better can be done ?
Far is the ride ; but yet, my Lord,
 There's nearer shelter none.
Safe is that hold from storm or siege,
 However wide the war—
'Tis well resolved ! My gracious liege,
 This night we reach Dunbar."

XII.

O wretch, to fashion such a lie !
 O slave, to ruin one so fair !
O false to faith and chivalry !
 O villain, well may I despair !

Why live I longer, since I know
That prayer and penitence are vain ;
Since hope is dead for me below,
And hell can give no ghastlier pain ?
Beneath the flags that, day by day,
Return dull echoes to my tread,
A grave is hollowed in the clay ;
It waits the coming of the dead :
A grave apart, a grave unknown,
A grave of solitude and shame,
Whereon shall lie no sculptured stone
With legend of a warrior's name.
O would it yawn to take me in,
And bind me, soul and body, down !
O could it hide me and my sin,
When the great trumpet-blast is blown !
O might one guilty form remain
Unsummoned to that awful crowd,
When all the chiefs of Bothwell's strain
Shall rise from sepulchre and shroud !
How could I meet their stony stare—
How could I see my father's face—

I, the one tainted felon there,
The foul Iscariot of my race ?

XIII.

I sought her presence in the hall—
Not as a knight prepared to woo,
But like a faltering criminal
Who knows not what to say or do.
I told the story once again
Of wide rebellion in the land,
Of clamour raised against her reign,
Of treason by the preachers planned.
I told her that the English Queen
Was bent to drive her from the throne,
That still Elizabeth's aim had been
To rule in Britain's isle, alone.
“Madam,” I said, “though great her power,
Trust me, that woman's craft is vain ;
Nor any town, nor any tower,
Shall she usurp on Scottish plain.
Though knaves and hypocrites combine,
Though the old faith be trampled down,

We'll rally round our royal line,
And perish ere they wrong the Crown !

XIV.

“ But these are not the days of yore,
When duty was a sacred thing,
When loyal hearts the people bore,
And priests were subject to the king.
Not now, upon the Sabbath-day,
Are men exhorted to obey,
Nor do they meet to kneel and pray.
Savage and wild the preacher stands,
And imprecates with lifted hands
The wrath of Heaven upon the head
Of all who differ from his creed.
Nor only that ; the pulpit rings
With lying tales of priests and kings.
Bold in his self-commissioned cause,
The railing rebel spurns the laws,
And bids his hearers bare the sword,
Against their rulers, for the Lord !

O since your father, royal James,
Sighed out his life in Falkland tower,
How many churches, wrapped in flames,
Have witnessed to the spoilers' power !
Yea, even in Iona's isle,
That early Bethlehem of the west,
Where, by Columba's stately pile,
The bones of Scotland's monarchs rest,
Such deeds were done, by christened men,
As well might shame the Saracen.
For sacrilegious hands were there
The dead from out their graves to tear,
And scatter to the winds abroad
The relics of the saints of God !

XV.

“ And deem not that their rage has passed—
It lives, it burns within them still ;
Misrule and anarchy will last
While those wild preachers have their will.
This new rebellion shows their mood ;
The throne must, like the altar, down :

The hands that tore away the hood,
Are eager to profane the Crown !

XVI.

“ But we can stay them in their course ;
Force must be met, and fought by force !
The nobles who allowed their aid
To help the growing power,
Shrink from the monster they have made,
Insatiate to devour.
Ready are they with heart and hand
To crush rebellion in the land ;
All private quarrel to forego,
And league against the common foe.
Such, Lady, is their full intent,
And this the token they have sent.
Behold their names—recorded here
Are those of prelate, statesman, peer.
The heart of Scotland and its might
In this great bond of love unite ;
And never more shall treason dare

To lift its head in open air
Against a brotherhood so fair!

XVII.

“But, Madam, something they require—

O that I might from speech refrain!

Scarce can I utter their desire,

Or speak a prayer that may be vain!

Yet must I do it. Lady! see—

With throbbing heart and bended knee,

Thus low before your royal seat

I pour my homage at your feet!

O, by the heaven that spreads above,

By all that man holds fond and dear!

I had not dared to tell my love,

Or breathe that secret in your ear!

But for the urgency of the time,

When silence almost is a crime—

But for the danger to the throne,

James Hepburn to his grave had gone,

And never knelt as now!

Nay, gracious Madam—do not rise;

Well can I fathom the surprise
That shows upon your brow !
Were I by wild ambition stirred,
Or moved by selfish aim,
Then might you spurn my suit preferred,
Bid me begone, condemned, unheard,
And ever loathe my name.
Nay more—for frankly will I speak—
The marriage bonds I wear, though weak,
Would still have tied my tongue ;
Nor from my heart had friend or priest,
While life yet ebbed within my breast,
This free confession wrung !”

XVIII.

Silent and still, though pale as death,
Queen Mary kept her throne,
But for the heaving of her breath,
She seemed of marble stone.
Scarce by a gesture did she show
What thoughts were rushing by.
O noblest work of God !—how low,

How mean I felt when grovelling so,
With every word a lie !
“ And can it be,” at length she said,
“ That Bothwell has his Queen betrayed ?
Bothwell, my first and foremost knight—
Bothwell, whose faith I deemed more bright,
More pure than any spotless gem
That glitters in my diadem ?
Great God ! what guilt of me or mine
Hath thus provoked thy wrath divine ?
Weary, though short, has been my life ;
For dangers, sickness, murders, strife,
All the worst woes that man can fear,
Have thickened round me year by year.
The smiles of love I scarce had seen
Ere death removed them from my view ;
My realm had scarce received its Queen
Ere treason’s hideous trumpet blew.
They whom I sought to make my friends,
My very kin, proved false to me ;
And now before me Bothwell bends
In falsehood, not in faith, the knee !

O sir ! was this a knightly deed,
To wrong a woman in her need,
When neither help nor friends were nigh,
And snare her with an odious lie ?
False was the tale that brought me here,
False even as the love you feign ;
And doubtless now you hope, through fear,
Your Queen and Mistress to restrain !”

XIX.

Stung to the quick, but bolder far,
As men detected ever are,
I answered her again—
“ Madam ! if I have erred through love,
I look for pardon from above,
And shall not look in vain.
True love is prompt, and will not wait
Till chance or hazard ope the gate.
Not mine the arts that gallants own
Who glide and prattle round the throne !
A soldier I, unused to sue,
Or fawn as courtly minions do.

If I am plain and blunt of mood,
My sword is sharp and keen ;
And never have I spared my blood
In service of my Queen.
Why, Madam, should you speak of fear ?
I used no force to bring you here.
This castle is a royal hold ;
Above, upon the turret high,
The Ruddy Lion ramps in gold,
True sign of Scotland's majesty.
Safe as in Holyrood you bide
With friends around you and beside,
And here you keep your state.
What if I longed to speak my mind,
To tell you what the peers designed—
To plead my cause, however rude,
Where no rash meddler might intrude—
Was that a crime so great ?
Ah, Madam, be not so unkind !
If love is hasty, it is blind,
And will not bear to wait."

XX.

Then rose she up ; and on her brow
Was stamped the Stuart frown :—
“ By all the saints in heaven, I trow
This man would bear me down !
He prates of love, as if my hand
Were but a sworder’s prize,
That any ruffian in the land
Might challenge or despise !
What mad ambition prompts you, sir,
To utter this to me ?
What word of mine has raised your hopes
In such a wild degree ?
I gave you trust, because I deemed
Your honour free from stain ;
I raised you to the highest place
That subject could attain,
Because I thought you brave and true,
And now, forsooth, you dare to woo !
Are these your thanks for all my grace,
Is this your knightly vow ?

Fie, Bothwell ! hide your perjured face—
There's falsehood on your brow !”

XXI.

Swift as the adder rears its head
When trampled by the shepherd's tread,
Sprang up my pride ; for word of scorn
By me was never tamely borne.
Like liquid fire through every vein
The blood rushed burning to my brain ;
All the worst passions of my soul
Broke out at once beyond control.
No longer did I feign to woo ;
Pity, remorse, away I threw,
And, desperate that my aim was seen,
I, as a rebel, faced my Queen !

XXII.

“ Madam ! I sought in gentle guise
To win your royal ear ;

Since humble speech will not suffice,
In words unblent with courtesies
 My message shall you hear.
I speak not for myself alone ;
But for the noblest near your throne.
Deeply the Lords of Scotland mourn
 The cause of this your grief ;
The fate which left their Queen forlorn,
 And took away their chief.
But sorrow, though it wring the heart,
 Has limits to its range ;
And duty must resume its part,
 Since even empires change.
Therefore they pray you, of your grace,
 To put aside the garb of dule,
And choose some mate of Scottish race
 To aid you in the sovereign rule.
You need a guardian for your son,
And they a chief to lead them on.
There's not a man but will rejoice
To hail the partner of your choice :
To him obedience will they yield,

Him will they follow to the field ;
And deal so strictly with your foes,
Whether abroad or here,
That the wide land shall gain repose,
And good men cease to fear.

XXIII.

“So say the Lords : and all agree
To follow and be ruled by me.
Traced on this parchment are the names
Of those who own and urge my claims.
Therefore the suit which you despise
Seems not so strange to other eyes ;
Nor, Madam, were it safe or wise
To thwart their wishes now.
Alone, be sure, you cannot stand ;
Gone is the sceptre’s might ; the brand
Must still the tumults of the land,
And lay rebellion low.
Your nobles proffer well and fair ;
They wait your answer to their prayer.

And now, 'twere best I tell you plain,
Resistance to that prayer is vain.
Their will—or, if you think the word
Too harsh—their counsel must be heard !
Well know I, Madam, what I do,
 And what awaits me if I fail :
I stand not here to fawn or sue,
 I came determined to prevail !
Think not that rashly I provoke
The sentence and the headsman's stroke !
Hope not for rescue—none will come ;
As well seek answer from the dumb !

XXIV.

“Nay, if you doubt me, send and try.
No harsh or timid gaoler I !
Your messengers have leave to go
Where water runs or breezes blow.
Send forth your summons—warn them all !
 Tell every noble, far and near,
That Bothwell lured you to his hall,
 And holds you as a captive here.

Bid Morton come, bid Cassilis arm ;
Call Errol, Caithness, and Argyle ;
Give order for the wide alarm
To ring through strath and sound o'er isle.
Call Lethington, your trustiest friend ;
Warn Herries of this rude surprise—
How many lances will they send !
Believe me, not a man will rise !
Bound to my cause is every peer ;
With their consent I brought you here :
And here your Highness must remain,
And quell your woman's pride ;
Till from Dunbar a joyous train
To Holyrood shall ride,
With Bothwell at your palfrey's rein,
And you his willing bride ! ”

XXV.

O tiger heart ! that fiercer grew
With every anguished breath she drew—
That gloated on her quivering eye,
And trance of mortal agony !

O savage beast ! most justly driven
By man from home, by God from heaven !
What fitter refuge could I have
Than this neglected lair,
Where, grovelling o'er my empty grave,
I yet am free to howl and rave,
And rend my grizzly hair ?
O well becomes it me to rage
At crimes of other men,
To snarl defiance from my cage,
And antic in my den—
I, than all others guiltier far,
So vile, so lost, so mean !
O fade from heaven, thou evening star,
I cannot bear thy sheen !

XXVI.

Hopeless, abandoned to despair,
What else could Mary do but yield ?
I took her hand—she left it there ;
'Twas cold and white as frost on field.

I tried to comfort her ; a burst
Of frenzied tears was her reply :
For ever be the deed accurst
That forced such witness from her eye !
Dim as an unregarded lamp,
Her light of life was on the wane,
And on her brow was set the stamp
Of utter misery and pain.
Like some caged bird that in dismay
Has fluttered till its strength is gone,
She had no power to fly away,
Though wide the prison-door was thrown.
In vain I strove to wake a smile,
In vain protested she was free ;
For bitterly she felt the while
That henceforth she was bound to me !

XXVII.

Again I entered Holyrood ;
Not as an unexpected guest,

But, in the pride of masterhood,
With haughty eye and princely crest.
The cannon thundered welcome out ;
The magnates all were there ;
And though I missed the people's shout,
For them I did not care ;
More trusty than the rabble rout,
My troopers filled the square !

XXVIII.

No draught from magic herb or flower
Is equal to the taste of power !
Right royally I took my stand,
With knights and squires on either hand,
And gave due audience to the ring
As though I had been born a king !
More wondrous yet—my altered tone
Seemed strange or malapert to none.
With deep respect and visage meek,
Each civic ruler heard me speak—
Was proud my mandate to fulfil,
And bowed obedience to my will.

But when I turned me to the Peers,
Something there was that waked my fears :
A guarded, cold, and formal air,
A staid retent of dignity,
A studied guise of courtesy,
Which faithful friends do never wear.
The greatest nobles did not come
To bid their Sovereign welcome home,
Or ratify with cordial hand
The weighty promise of their Band.
Why kept they from me at the time
 When most I lacked their aid ?
Was I, whom they had urged to crime,
 Deserted and betrayed ?
Did they but league to tempt me on ?
 Were all their vows a lure ?
Even with my foot upon the throne,
 I stood as insecure
As the rash huntsman on the lake
 When winter slacks its spell,
Who feels the ice beneath him quake,
 And dreads the treacherous well.

XXIX.

Yet not by look, or word, or sign,
Did I my fears betray ;
One sole desire and thought was mine,
To haste the wedding-day.
The law, though drowsy in its course,
Gave me, at length, a full divorce.
Nor did the Church refuse its aid,
Though Craig a stern remonstrance made.
He was a zealot like the rest,
But far more honest than his kind,
And would not yield, without protest,
A service hateful to his mind.
Warned by the past, I would not wait
Till Mary breathed again.
I did not ask for idle state,
For gathering of the proud and great,
Or pomp of nuptial train.
I spoke the word—she made me Duke.
I claimed her hand the self-same day :

And though like aspen-leaf she shook,
And wan and piteous was her look,
She did not answer, Nay !

xxx.

All was accomplished. By my side
The Queen of Scotland knelt, a bride.
In face of Holy Kirk, her hand
Was linked with mine in marriage band :
Her lips pronounced the solemn word ;
I rose, her husband and her lord !

And now, what lacked I more ?
Around me thronged the guests to pay
Their duty on the wedding-day :
Proud and elate, I smiled on all
As master in that royal hall.
Scarce had I spoke, when clashing fell
A weapon on the floor :
I trembled, for I knew it well—
The sword that Darnley wore.

PART SIXTH.

PART SIXTH.

I.

O THAT I were a mountaineer,
To dwell among the Highland hills !
To tread the heath, to watch the deer,
Beside the fountains of the rills ;
To wander by the lonely lake
All silent in the evening's glow,
When, like a phantom, from the brake
Comes gliding past the stealthy roe—
Without a thought, without a care,
Without ambition, pomp, or crime,
To live a harmless peasant there,
And die at God's appointed time !
For O, of what avail are power,
Wealth, worship—all we seek to win,

Unless they bring the priceless dower
Of rest, and hope, and peace within ?

II.

I had no peace ; if peace it be
To rest unscared, to wake secure,
To let the fancy wander free,
Or dream of pleasant things and pure :
To take sweet counsel with a friend,
Or, dearer, with a loving wife,
And sometimes gladly to unbend
The strained and weary bow of life.
Broken and feverish was my sleep,
For, all night long, within my room
Methought I heard the murderers creep,
And voices whisper through the gloom.
Nor, when the ghastly night was o'er,
Content or respite did I win ;
For guilt stood sentry at the door,
And challenged all who ventured in.
In fear I slept ; in fear I woke ;
In fear I lingered out the day ;

Whatever lord or courtier spoke,
I thought was uttered to betray.
I had no friends, save those whose fate
A common danger linked with mine—
Men who provoked the people's hate,
And roared, like ruffians, o'er their wine.
The burghers heard the noisy brawl
That scared the swallows from their eaves,
And mourned that Scotland's royal hall
Should thus be made a den of thieves.

III.

I had a wife—a fair one too—
But love I durst not even name !
I kept aloof, for why renew
The memory of my sin and shame ?
She was my hostage, not my bride ;
Enough it was for me to know
She could not sever from my side,
Nor yet unsay the marriage-vow.
O these were not my thoughts of yore,
When, free from fell ambition's taint,

I worshipped, as I knelt before
The queen, the woman, and the saint !
My hand had torn the wings of love,
Profaned its temple, soiled its shrine ;
No pardon here, nor yet above,
Could granted be to guilt like mine !

IV.

Pardon ! I sought it not from men ;
I would not take it at their hand ;
I owned no judge, no master then ;
I was the lord within the land.
Pardon ! the word was made for slaves,
Not for a Sovereign Prince like me :
Lost is the man who pardon craves
From any baser in degree.
There is a peak of guilt so high,
That those who reach it stand above
The sweep of dull humanity,
The trail of passion and of love.
The lower clouds that dim the heaven,
Touch not the mountain's hoary crown,

And on the summit, thunder-riven,
God's lightning only smites them down !

V.

O for a war to make me freed !
Had England but denied my claim,
And sent an army o'er the Tweed
To wrap the Border braes in flame—
Then Scotland would have risen indeed,
And followed me, if but for shame !
I might have met the foe in field,
And raised the Hepburn's name so high,
That none thereafter on my shield
Could trace the bend of infamy.
I might have won the people's heart,
For all men love the stalwart arm ;
And valour triumphs over art,
As faith defies a wizard's charm.
Once victor o'er my country's foes,
What lord in Scotland durst oppose
Her champion's rights, or mutter shame
Against my newly-gilded name ?

Nor to the preachers had I turned
Disdainful ear. I never spurned
Their doctrines, though I did not care,
And knew not what those doctrines were.
In truth, I thought the time had come
When every state in Europe wide
Should clear itself from bonds of Rome ;
And let the Pontiff, deified,
Deal with the candle, book, and bell,
In any way that pleased him well.

VI.

But England moved not. England lay,
As doth the lion in the brake,
When waiting for some noble prey,
With ear intent, and eye awake :
I, like a wretched mongrel cur,
Might safely pass his couch before ;
Not for my snarling would he stir—
I was not worth the lion's roar !
The courtiers left me ; one by one,
Like shadows did they glide away :

My old confederates all were gone—

Why should the fortune-hunters stay?

VII.

There was dead silence for a space :

A hush, as deep and still

As on the lowly valley lies,

When clouds, surcharged with lightning, rise,

And loom along the hill.

Then with a rush, the rumours came

Of gatherings near at hand,

Where nobles, knights, and chiefs of fame,

Were arming in the Prince's name,

To drive me from the land !

And straightway through the city rose

The low and angry hum,

That tells of keen and bitter foes

Who cluster ere they come.

Post after post rode clattering in,

Loud rung the court with soldiers' din ;

For Bolton at the first alarm

Bade all the troopers rise and arm.

VIII.

Aroused as if by trumpet-call,
I felt my spirit bound ;
No longer pent in hateful hall,
Now must I forth to fight or fall,
With men-at-arms around !
I cared not what the scouts might bring—
I hungered for the strife ;
When victor, I must reign as King ;
If vanquished, yield my life.
With spear in rest, and visor down,
'Twas but one swift career—
A glorious grave, or else a crown—
The sceptre, or the bier !
Aha ! there was no tarrying then !
For prance of steed, and tramp of men,
And clash of arms, and hasty call,
Were heard in court, and street, and hall.
Each trooper drew a heartier breath,
And keener glowed his eye ;

I knew that from the field of death

No man of mine would fly !

IX.

“ Give me your hand, brave Ormiston !

My father loved you dear !

Not better than you love his son—

For since the day that I could run,

Or shake a mimic spear,

You were my guardian and my guide,

And never parted from my side

In danger, doubt, or fear.

There's comfort in thy hearty grasp ;

By heaven, it is an honest hand !

I'd rather hold it in my clasp,

Than any noble's in the land.

Henceforward must I stand alone,

Or only lean on friends like thee ;

Of all the caitiff Lords, not one

Is here to strike a blow for me !

But let it pass—we'll match them yet !
The star of Bothwell hath not set ;
Nor will it pale its royal light,
For traitor's craft or foeman's might.
I'll hold account for every deed,
From this momentous hour ;
And those who fail me in my need
Shall feel me in my power !

x.

"Now then; what news?" "This much I learn,
That Morton, Atholl, and Glencairn,
Lindsay and Home, Kirkaldy, Mar,
Drumlanrig, Cessford, raise the war.
They've drawn to Stirling. What their force,
Our scouts could hardly tell ;
Enow there are of man and horse,
To fence a battle well."
"Morton ! art sure ? Is Morton there ?
Ah, then I have him in the snare !

If it be mine, but once, to tread
Victorious on a field of dead,
I'll have that perjured villain's head !
Atholl ? It is a monstrous sign,
When Atholl and Glencairn combine !
Who could have brought the friend of Rome
To beard me, from his Highland home ?
Ah, now I see it ! Lethington,
That arch-dissembler, stirs him on ;
My evil genius still was he—
Fool that I was to set him free !
A dungeon in yon fortress grim
Had been the fittest place for him.
So then ! The masks are thrown away,
 Confessed is every foe ;
And boldly to the battle fray,
 With lighter hearts we'll go.
But there's a danger near at hand,
 A snake to crush or kill !
What hear'st thou of the City band ?
 The craftsmen—bide they still ?”

XI.

“ If I have read their faces right,
My life on't, they will rise to-night !
The booths are closed, the windows barred ;
In every street patrols a guard.
The rogues are restless ; by and by,
They'll all come swarming here :
'Twere best to flit, though not to fly,
Whilst yet the road is clear.
I am not wont to shun a fray,
And seldom give a faint advice,
But this most frankly do I say—
I'd rather ride the Teviot thrice,
When rolling in its heaviest flood,
Than meet that rascal multitude !
Give me an open field without,
And then, with fifty men,
I'd drive, like chaff, the rabble rout
Back to their smoky den.
We dare not venture, for their guard,
What force these walls require ;

And shame it were, if, in our ward,
The Palace sunk in fire !
Away then, Duke ! and warn the Queen :
Doubtless her Grace will gladly ride !
Her presence must be plainly seen,
To bring the faithful to our side.
Were all the Border chieftains true,
I'd care not what the rest might do.
I knew that soon the strife must come—
That stout Kirkaldy would not sleep,
Nor Morton tarry in his keep—
But this revolt of Ker and Home
Hath changed the aspect of the war :
Therefore let's forth without delay.
Our trysting-place shall be Dunbar,
With Borthwick on the way."

XII.

I know not why : but o'er my soul,
That eve, the self-same bodement stole
That thrilled me with a sad presage
When last I gazed on Hermitage.

The troopers in procession wound,
Along the slant and broken ground,
Beneath old Arthur's lion-hill.

The Queen went onward with her train ;
I rode not by her palfrey's rein,
But lingered at the tiny rill

That flows from Anton's fane.

Red was the sky ; but Holyrood
In dusk and sullen grandeur stood.
It seemed as though the setting sun

Refused to lend it light,

So cheerless was its look, and dun,

While all above was bright.

Black in the glare rose spire and vane,
No lustre streamed from window-pane ;
But, as I stood, the Abbey bell
Tolled out, with such a dismal knell
As smites with awe the shuddering crowd,
When a king's folded in his shroud—

Methought it said, Farewell !

XIII.

So passed we on. The month was June :
We did not need the lady moon
To light us onwards on our way
Through thickets white with hawthorn spray.
Past old Dalhousie's stately tower,
Up the lone Esk, across the moor,
By many a hamlet, many a spring,
By holt, and knowe, and fairy ring,
By many a noted trysting-place,
We held our course, nor slacked our pace,
Till far away beyond the road
The lights in Borthwick Castle showed.
Short tarrying had we there, I ween !
Again we sought the woodlands green ;
For fiery Home was on our track,
With thousand spearmen at his back :
Nor dared we rest, till from Dunbar
I gave the signal for the war.

XIV.

By heaven, it was a glorious sight,
When the sun started from the sea,
And in the vivid morning light
The long blue waves were rolling free !
But little time had I to gaze
Upon the ocean's kindling face,
Or mark the breakers in the bay—
For other thoughts were mine that day.
I stood upon the topmost tower :
From wood, and shaw, and brake, and bower,
I heard the trumpet's blithesome sound,
I heard the tuck of drum ;
And, bearing for the castle mound,
I saw the squadrons come.
Each Baron, sheathed from head to heel
In splendid panoply of steel,
Rode stalwartly before his band,
The bravest yeomen of the land.
There were the pennons that in fight
Had flashed across the Southron's sight—

There were the spears that bore the brunt,
And bristled in the battle's front

On many a bloody day—

The swords, that through the hostile press,
When steeds were plunging masterless,

Had hewn their desperate way !

O gallant hearts ! what joy to ride,
Your lord and leader, prince and guide,
With you around me, and beside,
But once in battle fray !

XV.

Brief counsel held we in the hall :
Ready for fight seemed one and all.
Though somewhat I was chafed to bear
But cold regard from knight and peer.
I was the husband of their Queen :
Not less, nor more. Old Seton's mien
Was haughty, grave—no frankness there.
With his long beard, and lyart hair,
His heavy mantle o'er him thrown,
He looked an effigy of stone.

He must be in his grave ere now,
And so I will not speak him wrong ;
But, then, the hardness of his brow
Was more than I could suffer long.
He was a noble of a stamp
Whereof this age hath witnessed few ;
Men who came duly to the camp,
Whene'er the Royal trumpet blew.
Blunt tenure lords, who deemed the Crown
As sacred as the Holy Tree,
And laid their lives and fortunes down,
Not caring what the cause might be.
Such chiefs were they who held the fight,
And strove, and would not yield,
Till rushed from heaven the stars of night
O'er Flodden's cumbered field.
Spare were his words, his greeting cold,
His look more distant than of old.
But that 'twere madness to offend
The simplest knight that seemed a friend ;
But that my men were few—
I would have made Lord Seton know

That not a peer should slight me so,
Or fail in reverence due !

XVI.

And Mary—what did she the while ?
Alas, she never showed a smile !
I dared not ask her to appear
Within the castle hall,
Her champions and her knights to cheer—
She might have hailed them with a tear,
Or breathed a word in Seton's ear,
That would have wrought my fall.
She loathed her bondage—that I knew.
What is it woman will not do
To free herself from thrall ?
She, daughter of a race of kings,
Instinct with that desire
Which makes the eagle beat its wings
Against the prison wire—
She, wronged, insulted, and betrayed,
Might she not claim her vassals' aid ?

Conjure them by their oath and vows
To bear her from her hated spouse,
And, in the face of heaven, proclaim
My guilt, my treason, and my shame?
They asked not, in her secret bower,
The wearied Queen to see;
I took, by right, the husband's power,
And none dared question me.

XVII.

Another morn—another day!—
And what, ere dusk, was I?
A fugitive, a castaway,
A recreant knight who did not stay
On battle-field to die!
Curs'd be the hands that held me back
When death lay ready in my track,
Curs'd be the slaves who turned my rein
And forced me panting from the plain!—
O boaster, liar, murderer—worse,
Traitor and felon—hold thy curse!

Curse not, for lost though others be,
There's none so deep debased as thee !
A murderer may be strong of heart,
A liar act a warrior's part,
A traitor may be bold and brave,
A felon fearless at the grave—
Branded, condemned, of fame bereft,
The courage of a man is left.
But coward—O that sickening sound !
Great God ! To pass without a wound,
Without one shivered spear or blow,
From such a field, from such a foe,
To lose a Queen and kingdom so—
To tremble, shrink, and vilely fly—
It was not I !—it was not I !

XVIII.

O breeze ! that blowest from the west,
O'er that dear land I loved the best—
Breathe on my temples, cool my brow,
And keep the madness from me now !

Blood seems to rankle in my eyes,
Red as a furnace glare the skies ;
And all things waver up and down,
Like shadows in a burning town.
There's hellish laughter in mine ear—
More air—more air ! I stifle here !

XIX.

Devil ! thou shalt not yet prevail ;
Before thy face I will not quail !
I fled—Do brave men never fly ?
I am no coward—'tis a lie !
I stood upon Carberry's height,
Eager, intent, resolved to fight,
Ay, to the death, as seems a knight !
Down on the plain, beyond the hill,
The foe were motionless and still.
Why tarried so the rebel lords ?
Were we not ready with our swords ?
They came not on with shield and targe,
And lances levelled for the charge ;

But safe in summer ambush lay,
Like children on a holiday.

XX.

I sent a challenge to their van—
The Laird of Grange that challenge bore,
I spared his life an hour before—
I bade them choose their bravest man,
 My equal in degree ;
So that we two alone might try
The cast for death or victory,
 And all the rest go free.
No braggart speech was that of mine.
My blood had flowed, ere then, like wine,
In fiercer combat and more fell
Than any Scottish peer could tell.
I, who had laid John Elliot low,
Need scarce have feared another foe !

XXI.

Rare answer to my call they gave—
O they were noble hearts and brave !

First, Tullibardine offered fight.

He was at best a simple knight,

Without a claim, without a right

To meet a prince like me.

He was no mate in camp or hall ;

I stood not there to fight with all,

Whatever their degree.

“I dare not then,” Kirkaldy said,

“To take this quarrel on my head.

If Tullibardine ranks too low

To hold your challenge as a foe,

No better claim have I.

Yet, would the Duke of Orkney deign

To meet me yonder on the plain,

And there his fortune try,

I cannot think that any stain

Upon his name would lie.

It has been mine, ere now, to ride

In battle front by Princes' side ;

With Egmont I have broke a lance,

Charged with the Constable of France—”

Then Ormiston broke in :—

“What needs this vaunting? Wherefore tell
A story that we know full well?
If never Scot did win
More fame than you in fields abroad,
Where better men, I think, have trod,
How stand you here to-day?
A traitor to your Queen and God,
A knave in knight’s array!
Aha! you startle at the word—
Here am I ready, with my sword,
To prove it, if you dare!
I am your equal—will you fight?
I stand in arms for Mary’s right—
Do this, and I’ll believe you quite,
Rank boaster though you are!”

XXII.

Grimly his foe Kirkaldy eyed,
And heavy breath he drew;
Clenched was his hand as he replied,
For sharp the taunt, and true.

“Thou hast the vantage—that I feel !

Thy wit hath mastered mine :

I came not here to prove my steel

On ruffian crests like thine !

Yet just, in part, is thy rebuke,

So much I yield to thee—

I was in fault to urge the Duke,

As now thou urgest me.

But not by jeer or ribald word

Canst thou so far prevail,

As tempt me now to draw my sword,

Far less return thy rail.

I will not meet a murderer, sir,

For such, I ween, art thou !”

“So la ! Here is a goodly stir,

And tender conscience too !

John Knox has done his duty well,

His pupil’s apt and fain !

When holy Kirk rings out the bell,

Her saints must needs refrain.

Hearken, sir knight ! for all your boast,

For all your foreign pride,

Your place is humble in the host,
And more—you stand defied !
I fling the lie into your teeth,
The scorn upon your head !
Say, was that sword within its sheath,
When priestly Beatoun bled ?
Murder, indeed ! Pluck off your glove,
Lift up your hand on high—
Swear, in the face of heaven above,
You're sackless—then I lie ! ”

XXIII.

“ Hold, sirs ! ” I said, “ and list to me.
Your quarrel well can wait :
Since present combat may not be,
Forbear this rude debate !
Unanswered is my challenge still
By those to whom 'twas borne,
If you, Kirkaldy, spoke my will—
Is that from fear or scorn ?
Your offer, sir, was mere pretext !
Doubtless some squire would venture next ;

Or some stark yeoman of your band
Would crave to meet me, hand to hand !
Go—say to Morton and to Mar,
I strained my courtesy too far,
In that I sent my battle-gage
To every rebel peer.
Perchance their prudence cools their rage,
Or else they did not hear !
Brave leaders have you, Laird of Grange—
I wish you joy, Sir, of the change !
Here might I tarry for a week,
And never find a foe.
The friends in France of whom you speak
Had scarcely lingered so !

XXIV.

“ Go back—and tell them I revoke
The general challenge that I spoke.
Say that I now demand the right,
Open to every peer and knight,
To call his equal to the field.
Say, that I smite on Morton’s shield !

If he refuse, through Europe wide
I'll brand him as a recreant knave—
If he comes forth, the quarrel's tried,
For one or both shall find a grave.
And now, God speed you ! go your way :
I have no other word to say."

XXV.

Glad was I when he turned his steed,
And slowly paced towards the mead,
Where, round a standard, whose device
I could not scan so far,
Lay stretched in sluggards' paradise,
The leaders of the war.
Yet throbbed my heart, for well I knew
A cursed chance had been,
While I was forth the field to view,
Kirkaldy met the Queen !
And fear came on me, as the blight
Of fever shakes the frame,
I could not guide my thoughts aright,
My blood was hot as flame.

But in his mail writhed Ormiston,
As writhes in storm the oak,
And twice I heard his angry groan
Ere yet a word I spoke.
“What answer on the rebels’ part
Will yon Kirkaldy bear?”
“An answer that will freeze your heart,
And drive you to despair!

XXVI.

“Yonder, unscathed, triumphant, goes
The only man I dread!
What madness made you interpose,
When he was ready-ripe for blows,
And I could strike him dead?
He takes a secret to their camp,
Is worth your life and mine,
My hand was up to break the lamp,
But you will have it shine!
Ay! and forsooth, you must display
Your idle chivalry to-day!

You'd fight with Morton ? Easy boast !

He will not fight with you.

Why, you proclaim your fortune lost—

You tell them that you doubt your host ;

For, if that host were true,

No warlike leader, ever known,

From the arch-angel Michael, down

To the poor Laird with twenty spears,

Would so dishonour his compeers !

And they are faint : and fainter still

You'll find them at the dawn,

If sets the sun behind the hill

Ere yet the swords are drawn.

Hark you—one only chance is ours !

Let me, this instant, form our powers.

The Border lances will not fail,

Though all the rest remain ;

I'll to the bands of Liddesdale,

And lead them to the plain.

Bide where you are, or seek the Queen ;

Leave all the charge to me,

And desperate work upon the green,
Within the hour, you'll see !
Come, Duke—the signal ! Let me go,
And, by my father's head,
I'll bring you bound your deadliest foe,
Or leave him yonder, dead !”

XXVII.

“ I cannot do it—for my word
Is pledged ; I needs must wait.”
“ You ? Are we nothing here, my Lord ?
You are not yet so great,
That valiant men should lay their lives
At your commandment down.
Sir—had you twenty royal wives,
You never wore the crown !
I have some reverence for my neck,
And will not risk it at your beck !
Hearken ! You know my way of old—
Best is the truth when bluntly told.
Your life and mine are now at stake,
There's but one game to play ;

One charge is all that we can make,
And that I'll make to-day !
Nay, if you wish it, come with me,
Together let us ride ;
No franker hand, so it were free,
I'd welcome to my side.
Better to die with helm on head,
Than mount a scaffold grim—
Why—you are paler than the dead,
You shake in every limb !
Are you the man who went so far
At Kirk-of-Field, and at Dunbar,
And shrink you from the face of war ?
Why stand you here as on parade ?
By heaven—I think the Duke's afraid !
If it be so, then fare you well !
Now, shall we onwards go ?
Each minute is a passing-bell—
'Sdeath ! answer, yes or no !"

XXVIII.

"I tarry here !" "God help thee then—
I'll see thy face no more !

Like water spilt upon the plain,
Not to be gathered up again,
Is the old love I bore.
Best I forget thee, Bothwell ! Yet
'Tis not so easy to forget ;
For, at the latest hour, I see
I've tynd a life by following thee.
Friends, fortune, fame, a crown are lost,
By you, the captain of a host,
The host is standing idly there,
And not a single blade is bare !
Saint Andrew ! what a scurvy tale
To carry back to Teviotdale !
Farewell, thou poor inconstant lord—
Farewell—it is my latest word !”

XXIX.

He parted like a flash of fire ;
He vanished o'er the hill ;
My friend, the follower of my sire,
The man I trusted still !

What spell was on me, that I stayed,

Nor tried the chance of war ?

Ah—she, the injured and betrayed,

The captive of Dunbar—

I did not dare to face her then,

Before Lord Seton and his men !

But, from the plain, a trumpet call

Came ringing, sharp and clear ;

Up flew the knightly pennons all,

Up rose, in clumps, the spear.

And hastily each leader went,

To marshal forth his band ;

And steeds neighed fiercely, to the scent

Of battle near at hand.

Then, from their ranks, Kirkaldy came,

To me he wended slow ;—

O, I could slay myself for shame,

As I recall it now !—

There was no vaunting in his look :

The man was brave as bold ;

His eye was like a priest's rebuke,

So calm it was and cold.

XXX.

“ Now, sir—will Morton forward stand,
Or does he shun me still ?”
Aloft Kirkaldy raised his hand,
And pointed to the hill.
“ Nay ! look, my lord, to yonder height,
And mark the tumult there ;
Is it for combat or for flight,
Those broken bands prepare ?
An ancient soldier, well I know
Each move on battle-plain ;
Though firm their front an hour ago,
They’ll never knit again !
There go the men from Teviot-side !
They do not fly from fear.
See—o’er the edge the troopers ride ;
How quick they disappear !
Now Liddesdale, your surest stay,
Is turning—Duke, you groan !
Whose ensign is it they display ?
Look there—it is your own !”

XXXI.

Yes ! every word he spoke was true ;

My cause was lost, and that I knew ;

Yet haughtily I said—

“ My challenge, sir ! Do you forget

That Morton hath not answered yet ? ”

Kirkaldy bowed his head.

“ Take this for answer—not for feud

Or chivalrous display,

Shall any drop of Scottish blood

Be wagered here to-day !

Forego this dream of idle strife,

Black Death is hovering near ;

O sir, you dally with your life

By longer tarrying here !

I love you not ; but loth were I,

Whate'er your deeds have been,

To see a Scottish noble die

A death of shame and infamy ;

And more, because he stood so high,

The husband of my Queen !

Take counsel from a foe—beware !
Fly, sir, while yet you can.
Attainted and proscribed you are,
A tried and sentenced man !
And swift and hasty be your flight ;
For, if you spur not, while the night
Can shroud you with its gloom,
You die—but not in noble fight ;
The scaffold is your doom !
Come then with me : while I am here,
No sudden onset need you fear.
I seek the Queen. Belike, once more,
You would behold her face :
Then, far away from Scotland's shore,
Depart—God give you grace !”

XXXII.

Had the earth yawned, the thunder crashed,
Or had the bolts of lightning flashed,
And right before me broke ;
I had not felt more deep abashed
Than when Kirkaldy spoke.

I went—God help me, how I went !—

A culprit up to Mary's tent :

No eyes were fixed on me.

All looked upon the Laird of Grange,

As if, throughout broad Scotland's range,

Was none so great as he.

XXXIII.

There was more life in Mary's face,

A higher dignity and grace,

Than I had marked for many a day.

Behind her, in their steel array,

Seton and Yester gravely stood :

Their presence boded little good,

No love for me had they.

And none were there, with kindly grasp,

My hand within their own to clasp ;

No voice to whisper in my ear

That hope was yet alive ;

No friend to bid me cope with fear,

And still with fortune strive.

I might have conquered—who can tell ?

I might have kept mine own :

O Ormiston—it was not well

To leave me thus alone !

XXXIV.

Before the Queen Kirkaldy bent,

And graciously she said :—

“ Now, speak, Sir Knight ; with what intent

Is yonder host arrayed ?

What seek my Lords ? ” Then answered he,

“ They come to set your Highness free !

Your pardon—though the Duke be here,

I must speak boldly on.

They hold him as a traitor peer,

To you and to your son—”

Then burst my wrath ;—“ Dare they deny

The solemn Band they gave ?

By heaven, such weight of infamy

Should sink them to the grave !

Did they not say that I alone

Was the fit man to guard the throne ?

Who claimed for me my Sovereign's hand ?
Have faith and honour left the land ?”

XXXV.

“ Your pardon, Duke !” Kirkaldy said,
“ Not of the Band is question made,
But did you not, by force of war,
Convey her Highness to Dunbar ?
My gracious Liege ! The Peers invite
Your Highness to return this night
To Holyrood, your royal home,
And to escort you there, they come.
Not against you shall Scottish swords
E'er glitter in the sun.
This message bear I from the Lords ;
And now my task is done.”

XXXVI.

Not once did Mary's eye and mine
Encounter while he spoke.

I felt it as a dismal sign :
The daughter of the Stuart line
 Would not endure the yoke !
“ My answer, sir,” she said, “ depends
Upon the temper of your friends.
Plainly—their purpose with the Duke ?
Mark this, that when his hand I took
 And spake the solemn vows,
I lost my freedom to rebuke ;
 I owned him as my spouse.
If, for my sake, the Lords appear,
The right is mine to dictate here. .
My husband shall not brook the shame
 Of trial and disgrace ;
I will not so demean my name,
 Or so belie my race,
As let my subjects venge my wrong,
 Whatever wrong there be.
Thanks be to God, I yet am strong
 Through those brave Lords you see !
Good sir ! your course has upright been,
Your honour all allow—

Pray you, deal frankly with your Queen

Who asks a service now.

Set free the path, your host restrain ;

And by your knighthood swear,

That not a man shall quit his train,

Ere I pass downward to the plain,

And greet my nobles there."

"So shall it be," Kirkaldy said ;

"For that I pledge my life, my head !

Free is the Duke to pass from hence,

Without molest, without offence,

With all his following, all his power,

So that he tarries not an hour."

XXXVII.

The tear was in Queen Mary's eye,

As forth she held her hand.

"Then is the time of parting nigh !

For, Bothwell, my command

Is that you go and save a life

That else were lost in useless strife.

Farewell ! We shall not meet again ;
But I have passed such years of pain—
So many partings have I known,
That this poor heart has callous grown.
Farewell ! If any thing there be
That moves you when you think on me,
Believe that you are quite forgiven
By one who bids you pray to Heaven !
No soul alive so innocent

But needs must beg at Mercy's door—
Farewell !" She passed from out the tent.
O God—I never saw her more !

XXXVIII.

Was it a dream ? or did I hear
A yell of scorn assail my ear,
As frantic from the host I rode ?
The very charger I bestrode
Rebelled in wrath against the rein,
And strove to bear me back again !
Lost, lost ! I cared not where I went—
Lost, lost ! And none were there,

Save those who sought in banishment

A refuge from despair.

How fared the rest? I do not know,

For I was maddened with my woe.

But I remember when we sailed

From out that dreary Forth,

And in the dull of morning hailed

The headlands of the North :

The hills of Caithness wrapped in rain,

The reach of Stroma's isle,

The Pentland, where the furious main

Roars white for many a mile—

Until we steered by Shapinsay,

And moored our bark in Kirkwall bay.

Yet not in Orkney would they brook

The presence of their banished Duke.

The castle gates were shut and barred,

Up rose in arms the burgher guard ;

No refuge there we found.

But that I durst not tarry long,

I would have ta'en that castle strong,

And razed it to the ground !

North, ever north ! We sailed by night,
And yet the sky was red with light,
And purple rolled the deep.
When morning came, we saw the tide
Break thundering on the rugged side
Of Sumburgh's awful steep ;
And, weary of the wave, at last
In Bressay Sound our anchor cast.

XXXIX.

O faithless were the waves and wind !
Still the avenger sped behind.
No rock so rude, no isle so lone,
That I might claim it as my own.
A price was set upon my head,
Hunted from place to place I fled ;
Till chased across the open seas,
I met the surly Dane.
These were his gifts and welcome—these !
A dungeon and a chain !

XL.

Descend, black night ! Blot out thy stars ;

Nor let them through those prison bars

Behold me writhing here !

For there's a hand upon my heart

That makes my being thrill and start ;

A voice is in mine ear.

I hear its whisper, sad and low,

As if a spirit wailed in woe—

“ Bothwell ! thine end is near.”

O then, in mercy, keep away,

Ye spectral forms, nor cast dismay

Upon me in my dying hour !

Why should it please you that I cower,

Like a lashed hound, beneath your stare,

And shriek, a madman in despair ?

Give me one night, 'tis all I crave,

To pass in darkness to the grave,

Nor more this agony renew—

What's here ?—No phantom of the tomb !

Death has not cast his livid hue

On that pale cheek, nor stamped his gloom
Upon the forehead, fair and high,
Of Scotland's Queenly Majesty !
Mary, is't thou ? and com'st thou here,
 Alive, to chide me for my wrong ?
O, for the love of God, forbear !
 Haunt me not now ! I've suffered long,
And bitter has my anguish been !
What brings thee hither, woeful Queen ?
Ah, what is that ? a scaffold dressed—
The axe, the headsman, and the priest—
O God ! it surely cannot be !—
Come, Death ; and I will welcome thee !

NOTES.

NOTES.

*“For one short month the sceptred might
Of Scotland was my own.”—P. 4.*

DATES OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS NOTICED IN THIS POEM.

I believe that a good deal of misconception regarding the personal history of Queen Mary has arisen from the slight attention which ordinary readers pay to dates. The leading events of Mary's life, at least such events as most powerfully influenced her destiny, are comprised within a very short period of time; and I think it may assist the reader by placing these before him in their chronological order:—

Marriage of Queen Mary with the			
Dauphin,	. . . .	24th April,	1558
Dauphin succeeded to the throne			
of France, as Francis II.,	. . . .	10th July,	1559
Francis II. died,	. . . .	5th Dec.	1560
Mary waited on by Darnley at Or-			
leans, and by Bothwell at Join-			
ville, in the early part of	. . . .		1561.

Mary landed at Leith, . . .	20th Aug.	1561
Marriage of Queen Mary with Darnley,	27th July,	1565
Bothwell married Lady Jean Gordon, don,	24th Feb.	1566
Murder of Riccio,	9th March,	1566
James VI. born,	19th June,	1566
Murder of Darnley,	10th Feb.	1567
Bothwell tried and acquitted, . .	12th April,	1567
Band subscribed by the chief nobility recommending Bothwell as a proper husband for the Queen,	19th April,	1567
Mary carried off to Dunbar by Bothwell,	24th April,	1567
Mary brought back to Edinburgh by Bothwell, and lodged in the Castle,	6th May,	1567
Bothwell divorced from his wife,	7th May,	1567
Marriage of Queen Mary with Bothwell,	15th May,	1567
Parting of Mary from Bothwell at Carberry,	15th June,	1567
Queen Mary sent to Loch Leven,	16th June,	1567

*"'Twas sin to smile, 'twas sin to laugh,
'Twas sin to sport or play."*—P. 15.

FANATICAL AUSTERITY OF THE REFORMERS.

By an Act of the Parliament of Scotland, passed in 1555 during the minority of Mary, the old and

popular sports of the common people were forbidden. "It is statute and ordained, that in all times cumming, no manner of person be chosen ROBERT HUDE, nor LITTLE JOHN, ABBOT OF UNREASON, QUEENS OF MAY, nor otherwise, nouthur in Burgh nor to Landwart, in onie time to cum." This restriction on the amusement of the lieges was accompanied with severe penalties against those who should contravene it. Any pretty girl who wished to be a candidate for the flowery chaplet of "the Queen of the May," then stood in manifest peril of forfeiting her character; for the statute proceeds:—"And gif onie women or others about summer trees singand, makis perturbation to the Queenis lieges in the passage throw Burrowes and uthers Landward Townes, the woman perturbatoures for skafrie of money, or uthewise, *sall be taken, handled, and put upon the Cuck-stules of everie Burgh or Toune.*" What a genial age it must have been, when poor maid Marian was liable to "handling" and the pillory, for the heinous offence of singing under the summer trees!

This Act was in full force when Mary returned to Scotland; and as any deprivation of the amusements of the working classes is certain to be followed by an outburst against the liberty of their superiors in rank and station, it is no wonder that the people, prohibited by statute from enjoying their own sports,

should have regarded with jealousy the gaieties which were exhibited in the Palace.

I shall simply quote the words of Hume, referable to the construction which the preachers were pleased to place upon the earliest attempts of Mary to render her Court attractive. "The pulpits had become mere scenes of railing against the vices of the Court ; among which were always noted as the principal, feasting, finery, dancing, balls, and whoredom (as Knox said), their necessary attendant. Some ornaments, which the ladies at that time wore upon their petticoats, excited mightily the indignation of the preachers ; and they affirmed that such vanity would provoke God's vengeance, not only against these foolish women, but against the whole realm." The personal remarks which John Knox directed from the pulpit against his Queen, may be found in any edition of his works.

*"She hated Mary from her soul,
As woman and as Queen."*—P. 20.

MARY'S CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF ENGLAND.

It is not surprising that Elizabeth should have regarded Mary from the very first with extreme

jealousy and dislike. Her own title to the crown of England, at least according to the ordinary rules of succession, was worse than doubtful, and had been disallowed by Parliaments held during the reigns both of her father and her brother. The accession of her sister Mary, after the death of Edward VI., made her position even worse, since the Parliament of England, by acknowledging Mary's legitimate right, virtually declared Elizabeth to be a bastard. It will be remembered that the marriage of Henry VIII. with his first wife, Catherine of Arragon, was set aside by the sentence of Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, after Henry had renounced allegiance to Rome, on the ground of nullity, Catherine having been his brother's widow. The marriage had been allowed in consequence of the papal dispensation; and Henry, who had then set his affections upon Anne Boleyn, used every exertion to obtain a divorce from Rome. That divorce, Pope Clement, from political motives, was averse to grant; and Henry, in consequence, threw off the papal authority, and declared himself the head of the English Church. The sentence of Cranmer was ratified and confirmed by Act of Parliament; and therefore Mary, as the offspring of an unlawful marriage void and null *ab initio*, was declared illegitimate, and rendered incapable of succession. But Henry had not waited,

even for the sentence of Cranmer, before consummating his second marriage with Anne Boleyn ; and Elizabeth was born before the decease of Catherine of Arragon. When Henry, moved by the charms of Jane Seymour, who became his third wife, sent Anne Boleyn upon false charges to the block, that marriage also was annulled, and the issue declared illegitimate ; and by Act of Parliament (8th June 1536) the Crown was settled on the King's issue by Jane Seymour, or any subsequent wife ; and in case he should die without children, he was empowered by will or letters-patent to dispose of the Crown. Jane Seymour died, leaving only one son, Edward ; the marriage with Anne of Cleves was hastily annulled ; and Catherine Howard was beheaded. After taking to himself a sixth wife, Catherine Parr, Henry became uneasy as to the state of the succession, and procured an Act of Parliament, limiting the succession to the Crown, in the event of the death of Prince Edward without issue, "to the King's daughter, Lady Mary, and her issue ; and in default of such issue, to Lady Elizabeth and her issue :—the King being empowered to appoint the succession of the Crown, on failure of all such issue, by his last will in writing."

Such is the abbreviate of the Act of Parliament, 28 Henry VIII. c. 7, by which the ordinary laws of

the realm were set at utter defiance ; for while the Princesses were expressly called to the succession, the Acts which declared them to be illegitimate were not revoked. About a month before his decease, Henry made his will, leaving the Crown first to Edward, then to Mary, then to Elizabeth ; and failing them and their issue, to the heirs of his younger sister, the Duchess of Suffolk, thus excluding the posterity of his eldest sister, Margaret, Queen of Scots, who, after his lawful children, were next in succession. Of Edward's right to the Crown there could be no doubt ; but Edward had formed the opinion that both his sisters were illegitimate. Accordingly, upon his deathbed, he desired letters-patent to be made out by commissioners specially named, again altering the succession, setting aside Mary and Elizabeth, and preferring the heirs of the Duchess of Suffolk. Upon these letters-patent was founded the claim of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey, who, personally blameless, became a sacrifice to the ambition of her husband's family. By the first Parliament of Queen Mary the Acts affecting her own legitimacy were set aside ; the sentence of divorce between Henry and Catherine of Arragon was repealed and annulled, and their marriage was declared to have been in every respect valid and lawful. This Act was another solemn

declaration of the illegitimacy of Elizabeth, who, as I have said, was born during the lifetime of Queen Catherine ; for it is evident that by no possible construction of law could Mary and Elizabeth both be held legitimate. Mary's right and status were never questioned by any power in Europe ; and so long as she lived, the claims of the Scots line were kept in abeyance. But on her death, when Elizabeth without opposition assumed the throne, with no better title than the destination contained in her father's will, Henry II. of France caused his daughter-in-law, Mary Queen of Scots, and Dauphiness, to assume openly the arms as well as the title of Queen of England. This was a direct challenge of the right and legitimacy of Elizabeth, and doubtless gave rise to that hatred which was not appeased until the unfortunate Queen of Scots died upon the scaffold at Fotheringay.

Elizabeth had the good fortune to be served by wise and able ministers ; and they, conscious of the radical defect in the title of their mistress, advised her that the surest mode of counteracting her rival was by fomenting the dissensions which at that time agitated Scotland, and by lending her countenance and aid to the Lords of the Congregation. For the adoption of this policy it would be unreasonable to blame Elizabeth. She was, in fact, the great Pro-

testant Sovereign of Europe, with Spain and France against her ; but the most serious and pressing danger was to be apprehended from Scotland. If Mary could by any means conciliate her subjects, and restore internal harmony to her realm, she might, without any imputation of rashness, proceed to enforce her undoubted hereditary right to the throne of England ; in which attempt, besides the co-operation of the Continental Catholic powers, she was certain to receive assistance from the English Catholics, then a large, influential, and discontented body. But by promoting discord in Scotland, and by assuming the character of protectress of the reforming party there ; by giving secret subsidies to the disaffected ; and by affording shelter to those who were guilty of rebellion, Elizabeth played her game so well, that at last she was able to appear as umpire between her hated rival and the insurgent nobles of Scotland. In all this she displayed consummate tact, judgment, and perfidy—the latter a quality which, in State affairs, it has long been the fashion to excuse : and no one can rise from an attentive perusal of the records of that time, without the conviction that the very wisest of the so-called Scottish statesmen of the day were mere tools and puppets in the hands of her and her counsellors. Murray has, by more than one writer, been repre-

sented as a high-minded and patriotic man. Before Elizabeth he was no better than a spaniel, cowering under the degradation of the lash, which was often unsparingly applied. And so it was with Morton, and all the others to whom she extended her protection, and who privily were the recipients of her bounty. To her machinations, successfully carried through by adroit and active agents, each unfortunate step in the career of Mary, whose nature was too guileless to enable her to descry the fine meshes of the net by which she was pitilessly surrounded, may easily be traced.

*“For still the phantom in her path
Had been a Scottish heir.”—P. 26.*

POPULAR PROPHECIES OF THE SUCCESSION OF THE
SCOTS LINE TO THE CROWN OF ENGLAND.

In every nation, at a certain period of its progress, prophecies of this kind are current; though it is but proper to add that, in many instances, there is good reason to suspect that the vaticinations of the elder seers have been altered and modified to suit events after their occurrence. The leading prophet of Scotland, whose fame has not yet passed

into oblivion, was Thomas Learmonth of Ercildoune, familiarly known to the peasantry as Thomas the Rhymer, who lived in the days of King Alexander the Third, and died, as appears from a charter by his son, previous to 1299, before Wallace had concluded his great struggle for Scottish liberty. His traditionary adventures with the Queen of Elfland—a very different personage from Titania, the spouse of Oberon—have been made the theme of ballad and of song: indeed, he seems to have enjoyed in Scotland, for a very long series of years, the same magical reputation which was conferred, during the middle ages, upon the poet Virgil. His prophecies, however, are the great foundation of his fame, and it is curious to observe at what an early period these were cited as instances of remarkable fulfilment. He seems to have prophesied that one of the family of Bruce would gain the throne of Scotland; for, in Barbour's poem of *The Bruce*, which was composed about the year 1370, the Bishop of St Andrews is made to exclaim, on receiving intelligence of the slaughter of the Red Comyn by King Robert—

“Sekyrly

I hope, Thomas prophecy
Off Hersildoune sall veryfyd be
In him; for, swa our Lord help me,
I haiff gret hope he sall be king,
And haiff this land all in leding.”

Andrew Wintoun, prior of St Serf's, who compiled his Chronicle about the year 1420, speaks thus of one of the Rhymer's current prophecies :—

“Of this fycht quillum spak Thomas
Of Ersyldoune, that sayd in derne,
There suld meit stalwartly, starke and sterne,
He sayd it in his prophecy ;
But how he wist, it was ferly.”

There were, however, other popular prophets than Thomas of Ercildoune ; and in process of time their vaticinations became blended with his, and the greater prophet eclipsed the group of the lesser ones, and enjoyed the monopoly of the whole. No collection of these prophecies seems to have been made and published before the year 1608, after James VI. succeeded to the throne of England ; and therefore there is no satisfactory evidence as to their authenticity in the form in which they now exist. Ballads and popular rhymes, when transmitted only by oral tradition, must, in the course of time, undergo many changes both in dialect and form ; and that strong tendency towards the marvellous, which is by no means confined to the vulgar, may be presumed to encourage and invite imposture. But I deny altogether the assertion of Lord Hailes, that the popular Scottish prophecies relative to the succession of the Stuart family to the throne of England, were forgeries

or interpolations made subsequent to the death of Queen Elizabeth, for the purpose of being accommodated to the accession of King James ; and I do so upon the strength of evidence which cannot be overthrown. It is but fair that the prophets should receive credit where credit is justly due ; and in this instance it is impossible to deny to Thomas the Rhymer, or his follower, the possession of the prophetic mantle. The rhyme stands thus :—

“ However it happen for to fall,
The Lyon shall be lord of all ;
The French Queene shall beare the son
Shall rule all Britaine to the sea,
Which of the Bruce’s blood shall come
As neare as the nint degree.”

Now, although there is no earlier printed version of these prophecies than that to which I have referred, it is easy to show that this particular prediction was known and popularly quoted *previous to the return of Queen Mary from France* ; therefore previous to her marriage with Darnley, and at a time when Elizabeth was still young, and when the prospect of her contracting a matrimonial alliance was extremely probable. The following remarkable passage is extracted from a poem, of the authenticity of which there can be no question, by Alexander Scott, entitled *Ane New Yere Gift to the Quene, quhen scho come first*

hame. The poem, therefore, was composed in 1561.
It opens thus :—

“ Welcum, illustrat Ladye, and oure Quene ;
Welcum our lyone, with the Floure-de-lyce ;
Welcum our thrissill, with the Lorane grene ;
Welcum our rubent rois upon the ryce ;
Welcum our gem and joyfull genetrice ;
Welcum our beill of Albion to beir ;
Welcum our plesand Princess, maist of price ;
God gife thé grace aganis this guid new yeir.”

After no fewer than twenty-four stanzas of loyal greeting and aspiration, closing with a devout wish for the Queen’s marriage, the poet thus refers to the current prophecies. As it may be difficult for some readers to comprehend the meaning of the words when expressed in the old Scottish mode of spelling, I have ventured so far to modernise this stanza, but without changing a single word :—

“ If saws be sooth to show thy celsitude,
What bairn should brook all Britain by the sea ?
The prophecy expressly does conclude
The French wife of the Bruce’s blood should be :
Thou art by line from him the ninth degree,
And was King Francis’ party maik and peer ;
So by descent, the same should spring of thee,
By grace of God, against this good new year.”

Here we have, in language so precise as almost to amount to quotation, distinct and unequivocal refer-

ence to the prediction which Lord Hailes challenged as spurious.

I may add that curious testimony has been borne to the strange fulfilment of some of the Rhymer's prophecies by John Colville, whose funeral oration upon Queen Elizabeth (Paris, 1604) contains the following passage :—

“Nonne hæc Saturnii seculi argumenta indubitata? quæ mihi in memoriam exulceratam revocant, quod, cum puer essem audiveram balathrones ceraulas Thomæ Rythmici fatidici numerare quædam carmina trivialia, quæ tunc ludicra, nunc vero seria atque efficacia esse agnosco : verum se Delphice an divinitas inspirata sint, definire non audeo cum teste Augustino.”

I am very far from wishing it to be supposed that I rest much faith in the authenticity of popular rhymes, especially when these are of a prophetic character. Nevertheless, I hope my readers will not be displeased at my calling their notice to one instance in which a popular prophecy was unquestionably fulfilled. The extract from Scott's poem shows that the prediction was then current among the people of Scotland ; and there can be little doubt that it was known to Elizabeth. Nay more, I apprehend that the prophecy had been widely disseminated through England ; for, in 1562, an Act was passed by the

English Parliament, imposing heavy penalties on those who should be convicted of "feigning, imagining, inventing, and publishing *fond and fantastical prophecies*, as well concerning *the Queen's Majesty*, as divers honourable personages, gentlemen, and others of this realm." Strong indeed must have been the current of popular prophecy when the politic Elizabeth deemed it necessary to restrain it by statutory enactment. This Act was passed four years before the birth of James VI., an event which increased the jealousy of Elizabeth towards the unfortunate Queen of Scots.

"*There was that Riccio—sharp and sly.*"—P. 28.

FIRST CONSPIRACY AGAINST QUEEN MARY.

The details of the murder of Riccio are so well known that it would be out of place to repeat them here. But the conspiracy which led to that event deserves especial notice ; and I trust that a short explanation of its origin and aim will not be considered superfluous.

The Scottish nobles who promoted the cause of the Reformation, had a deep interest in its permanence. They knew well that, if the authority of Rome was again established, the immediate con-

sequence would be a restitution of the Church lands which had been appropriated as lawful spoils ; therefore, from the very first, they ranged themselves in opposition to Mary, whose devotion to the Catholic faith was notorious. At their head was Lord James Stuart, Prior of St Andrews, better known as the Earl of Murray, a bastard brother of the Queen, formidable alike from his ability and his ambition. He was the natural son of James V. by Margaret, daughter of Lord Erskine ; and it is supposed that, from an early period of his life, he entertained the hope of procuring a reversal of his illegitimacy, in which case he might, in the event of Mary dying without issue, have advanced a claim to the crown of Scotland. Nor was this a scheme so wild as to appear beyond the pale of probability. The claims of Henry VII. to the throne of England had been rested upon no better foundation ; and Elizabeth's right, as I have explained in a former note, was worse than doubtful. Murray was just the kind of man likely to succeed in such a design. He was cool, cautious, long-sighted, and unscrupulous ; and by taking the popular side in the then all-absorbing religious controversy, he greatly increased his reputation and his power. He also entered into deep and intricate relations with the Court of England.

When Mary, contrary to the wishes of Elizabeth,

consulted her own inclination by marrying Darnley, Murray threw every possible obstacle in the way. The means he employed are concisely stated by Lord Herries in his History.

“ A little after this, Henry Lord Darnley came to Scotland, upon a pass from the Queen of England for three months’ stay. Our Queen was desirous to see this young gentleman, who had been secretly proposed unto her for a husband. He was her own cousin in the third degree by his mother, who was daughter to the Earl of Angus, begotten upon the Queen who was mother to King James the Fifth, and grandmother to the Queen herself. It was soon seen that she took a liking unto him ; which by many means was indirectly crossed by the Earl of Murray. There had been propositions of marriage laid down heretofore to the Queen concerning this same gentleman, which were known to be put aside by the underhand working of the Earl of Murray, whereof the Queen was not ignorant. But now the many dislikes she had conceived against him made her resolve to take a husband, that by the happiness of succession a settlement might be expected to the crown and estate of the kingdom. Yet the crown being the mark whereat Murray aimed, his greatest study was to keep the Queen from marriage, which at this time he could not do handsomely himself. So now, as

formerly, he had recourse to Queen Elizabeth of England, who was soon persuaded to throw stumbling-blocks in the way. It was thought that, besides reasons of state and the assisting of Murray in his pretensions, the Queen of England had a secret averseness and antipathy to our Queen, one of her own sex, whom she knew to be her nearest successor ; but now, to have the comfort of a husband and the happiness of children, blessings that she knew herself not capable of, were things that she could not think upon but with envy.

“ But before Queen Elizabeth did show herself in the business, the Earl of Murray used what indirect means he could to cross the Queen’s resolutions. Religion was his chief objection, wherein he had the ministers to follow him with open mouth. They said that it could not stand with the honour of God, nor the Reformed Religion, that the Queen should take any to husband who had any tincture of Popery, nor before a visible assurance might be had of the preservation of the religion now established. These were public propositions. But the Earl of Murray, finding them not take the wished effect, he laid open challenge to one David Rizius, an Italian, who had served the Queen for many years, and who, from a Musician, became the Secretary of State—an active politick man, whose counsel the Queen made use of

in her greatest affairs. Upon this man he laid aspersions that the Queen was misled by his advice ; that he was a stranger, and one basely born ; and that for his cause she misregarded the advice of her nobility. These things were cried out by that party. They went yet further ; there were whispering means used to divert the Lord Darnley's affection from the Queen, and tales were sometimes minced at, as though David Rizius was many times too intimate with the Queen more than was fitting.

“The Queen observed all these proceedings, and knew from whom they came. But she was resolved to marry ; which she suspected was the thing in the world that would most vex the Earl of Murray ; and to strengthen her own faction, she called home the Earl of Bothwell from France, the Earl of Sutherland from Flanders, and took George Gordon, the Earl of Huntley's eldest son, out of prison, gave them all remissions, and restored them to their estates and honours.”

Riccio was then labouring to remove every impediment which had been cast in the way of the marriage of his royal mistress with Darnley ; little dreaming that the infatuated fool whom he was raising to a throne would repay his services by the blow of the assassin's dagger ! Murray, though a master in dissimulation, regarded Mary's marriage as too hazard-

ous an event for his own project to be allowed without an outbreak ; more especially as Mary had inconsiderately and foolishly agreed to use her influence with the Scottish Parliament to have the crown-matrimonial bestowed upon her husband. This serious error cost Mary dear. The Duke of Châtelherault, who stood next after her in succession, was of course opposed to such a grant, which threatened his hereditary rights ; and was thus for a time induced to lend his influence to Murray. Mary, being unable to obtain the consent of the nobles, took upon herself to proclaim Darnley King on the day of their marriage ; and the entry in the Canongate Register of Marriages is —“ Henry and Marie, Kyng and Qweine of Scotis.”

Murray attempted a rebellion ; but not being adequately supported by the people, he and his confederates were compelled to retire before the army which the Queen led in person, and took refuge in England. So closes the first act of the Murray conspiracy.

The opening of the second act is very different. The marriage being now consummated, and the Queen being pregnant, Murray, then fugitive and exiled, commenced an intimate correspondence with Darnley, whose pride, assumption, and insolence, coupled with his notorious ingratitude and infidelity to his consort, had by this time alienated from him the regard of all loyal subjects. It is almost inconceivable that

Darnley, imbecile and thoroughly vicious as he was, should have fallen into such a snare ; nevertheless we find that, only seven days before the murder of Riccio, a Band was granted by “ Archibald, Earl of Argyle ; James, Earl of Murray ; Alexander, Earl of Glencairn ; Andrew, Earl of Rothes ; Robert, Lord Boyd ; Andrew, Lord Ochiltree ; and their complices,” “to ane noble and mychty Prence, Henry, King of Scotland, husband to our soverane Lady.” And the terms of that Band were as follows. The subscribers bound themselves to maintain Darnley’s cause and quarrel against all the world, with life, lands, and goods ; to use their influence in Parliament to have his assumption of the crown-matrimonial ratified ; to fortify and maintain his title to the crown, failing the Queen without issue ; and to use *their interest* with Elizabeth in his behalf. I quote one passage, for the purpose of showing the extent of their submission : “Item, as they ar becoming trew and faythfull subjectes, men, and servandis to the said noble prence, and sall be leall and trew to his Majestie, as becomes trew subjectis to ther naturall prence, and as trew and faythfull servandis servis ther gud maisteris with ther bodeis, landis, gudis, and possessiounis. And sall nouthir spayr lyf nor dead in setting fordwart all thingis that may be to the advancement of the said noble prence.” We

have it on the authority of Knox, that a counter-band, signed by Darnley and his father the Earl of Lennox, was granted to the confederates, "for they durst not trust the King's word without his Signet." All this was perfectly well known to Elizabeth's agents ; indeed, they were privy to the whole transaction. The support of Morton was purchased by Darnley's resignation of his claim to the earldom of Angus ; and the plot being thus far advanced, Elizabeth was apprised of the conspiracy. Here, again, dates become of much value. The Earl of Bedford, and Randolph, who were then at Berwick, wrote to Cecil on 6th March, that "a matter of no small consequence in Scotland was intended ;" and "to this determination of theirs there are privy in Scotland these : Argyle, Morton, Boyd, Ruthven, and Lethington. In England these : Murray, Rothes, Grange, myself, and the writer hereof. If persuasions to cause the Queen to yield to these matters do no good, they propose to proceed *we know not in what sort.*" The "matters" in question were of great importance to Murray and his rebel confederates, for they included their estates in Scotland, it being Mary's declared intention that the fugitive Lords should be forfeited by Parliament. They were cited to appear on the 12th of March, so that some sudden and decisive step was necessary.

On the 9th of March, Riccio was murdered in the presence of the Queen, who was made a prisoner in her own palace. It was at first intended that the slaughter should be on a larger scale, so as to include Mary's principal supporters; as detailed by herself in a remarkable letter to Betoun, Archbishop of Glasgow, her ambassador at Paris. That letter bears date the 2d April, and the information it contains relative to the designs of the conspirators was evidently furnished by Darnley, who by that time had betrayed his confederates. After relating the horrible circumstances of the murder, but without charging her husband with direct participation, she writes :—

“ We all this time took no less care of ourselves than for our council and nobility, maintainers of our authority, being with us in our palace at the time; to wit, the Earls of Huntley, Bothwell, Atholl, Lords Fleming and Livingston, Sir James Balfour, and certain others our familiar servitors, against whom the enterprise was conspired as well as for David; and namely, to have hanged the said Sir James in cords. Yet, by the providence of God, the Earls of Huntley and Bothwell escaped forth of their chambers in our palace at a back window by some cords; whereon the conspirators took some fear, and thought themselves greatly disappointed in their enterprise.

The Earl of Atholl and Sir James Balfour by some other means, with the Lords Fleming and Livingston, obtained deliverance of their invasion. The provost and town of Edinburgh having understood this tumult in our palace, caused ring their common bell, come to us in great number, and desired to have seen our presence, intercommuned with us, and to have known our welfare : so when we was not permitted to give answer, being extremely bestead by those lords, who in our face declared, if we desired to have spoken them, they should cut us in collops, and cast us over the wall. So this community, being commanded by our husband, retired them to quietness."

Next day Murray arrived in Edinburgh, and at an interview with his sister expressed great affection and solicitude ; but, as Mary writes, "upon the morn he assembled the enterprisers of this late crime, and such of our rebels as came with him. In their council they thought it most expedient we should be warded in our castle of Stirling, there to remain while we had approved in Parliament all their wicked enterprises, established their religion, and given to the King the crown-matrimonial and the whole government of our realm : or else, by all appearance, firmly purposed to have put us to death, or detained us in perpetual captivity."

Mary owed her escape from this frightful peril to

her own presence of mind, and the influence which she still exercised over the weak and vacillating Darnley. She represented to him that, by aiding the designs of the rebel Lords, he was inviting his own ruin; and he, being thoroughly terrified by the dreadful consequences of his folly, abandoned the Lords (with whom he had been confederated for scarcely ten days), devised the means of escape, and fled with Mary to Dunbar. Once there, she was safe, at least in the meanwhile; for the loyal gentlemen of Scotland, in indignation at the unparalleled outrage upon their Queen, flocked to her standard, and the murderers of Riccio were compelled to take flight. Murray, however, who denied all complicity, and who had not been denounced by Darnley, remained; and in the sequel, through the mediation of Elizabeth, whose astute counsellors foresaw the effect of such undeserved lenity, all the conspirators and actors in the murder of Riccio were pardoned, except Morton, Lindsay, Ruthven, and one or two of inferior note. This act of grace, which is only one of many proofs of Mary's singular clemency, was made shortly after the birth of the Prince. It was a political blunder, but undoubtedly an amiable one. Elizabeth never pardoned those who rebelled against her authority. Mary took the opposite course, and to that we must ascribe her ruin.

"John Elliot of the Park."—P. 46.

BOTHWELL'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELLIOT.

The circumstances of this duel, in which Bothwell displayed great intrepidity, are minutely stated by a journalist of the time, and I have not deviated from his account. Elliot of the Park was no common marauder. He claimed to be, if not the chief of his name, at least the head of a powerful branch of the Elliots ; and asserted that, by hereditary right, he was the Captain of Hermitage Castle. He was, however, a notorious Border depredator, and is specially mentioned in an old poem by Sir Richard Maitland, entitled "*Aganis the Thieves of Liddesdail.*"

"They spulzie poor men of their packs,
They leave them not on bed, nor backs :

Both hen and cock,
With reel and rock,
The Laird's Jock—
All with him takes.

"They leave not spindle, spoon, nor spit,
Bed, bolster, blanket, shirt, nor sheet ;

JOHN OF THE PARK
Rypes chest and ark ;
For all such wark.
He is right meet."

*“’Twas in Craigmillar’s dusky hall
That first I lent my ear
To that deep tempter Lethington.”—P. 62.*

CONFERENCES AT CRAIGMILLAR.

After the flight of the insurgents who were openly concerned in the murder of Riccio, the affairs of Scotland assumed for some little time an appearance of tranquillity. The chief power was lodged in the hands of Murray, Bothwell, Argyle, Huntley, and Lethington; and if all these men had been well affected towards their Sovereign, and actuated by patriotic motives, there would have been no difficulty in settling the kingdom. Knox, the leading ecclesiastical demagogue, had disappeared immediately after the murder of Riccio; Morton, Lindsay, Ruthven, and other daring conspirators, were in exile; and Darnley, at least in political influence, was a mere cipher. He had forfeited the regard, if he had not entirely alienated from himself the affections of his wife, to whom the Bands and other evidence of his consummate perfidy had been shown. He was hated and despised by those who were privy to the designs of the conspirators; and his looseness, debaucheries, and arrogance were such that he was respected by none. Yet was he the occasion of a new conspiracy, far more tragical in its results than the first.

Murray and Lethington were both traitors ; and the unexampled lenity shown to them by their Sovereign, who not only had pardoned their offences, but had intrusted them with the administration of affairs, had not the effect of riveting their allegiance. The birth of a prince had lessened the chances, whatever these might have been, of Murray's succession to the throne. Still he might hope to reign as Regent, if not as King ; and he never for a moment lost sight of that grand object of his ambition. Lethington was bound heart and soul to Murray, whose dark, subtile, and intriguing spirit very much resembled his own. These two men, therefore, were ever on the watch for opportunities secretly to undermine the fortune of their mistress ; but their power was greatly circumscribed by the banishment of their confederates, and by the vigilance of the noblemen who were associated with them in the government.

Of these Bothwell was the most formidable. Without any pretence to personal religion, he was nominally a Protestant, and therefore not obnoxious to the people on the score of Popery. Since his recall from France, he had done good service to the Queen, and had risen high in her favour. He was Warden of the three Marches, Lord High Admiral of Scotland, and General of the land forces ; and his connections were extensive and powerful. He was

held in great dislike by the emissaries of Elizabeth, who had ever found him incorruptible ; and he was regarded by the conspirators as the most formidable enemy of their faction. But with all this he was a profligate man, of a daring and ambitious spirit ; unrestrained by real principle, and ready to go any lengths for the gratification of his own desires. He was also exorbitantly vain ; and the preference which was shown him by the Queen, on account of his undoubted services, appears to have awakened hopes, which possibly, at an earlier period, he had conceived.

Had Darnley, after the birth of his son, conducted himself with ordinary discretion, it might have been difficult for the conspirators to gain over Bothwell to their side. But that unhappy young Prince was thoroughly infatuated. His personal behaviour towards the Queen was of the most heartless and insolent kind. He took every opportunity of thwarting her government. He began to intrigue with the Romanists, and even went so far as to write to the Pope, denouncing the Queen for not having restored the mass. “ When,” says Tytler, “ his letters were intercepted, and his practices discovered, he complained bitterly of the neglect into which he had fallen, affirmed that he had no share in the government, accused the nobles of a plot against his

life, and at last formed the desperate resolution of leaving the kingdom, and remonstrating to foreign powers against the cruelty with which he was treated." Here is the testimony of Monsieur de Croc, the French ambassador to Scotland, written on 15th Oct. 1566, as to the relative estimation in which Darnley and the Queen were held : " It is in vain to imagine that he shall be able to raise any disturbance ; for there is not one person in all this kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, that regards him any further than is agreeable to the Queen. And I never saw her Majesty so much beloved, esteemed, and honoured ; nor so great a harmony amongst all her subjects, as at present is, by her wise conduct ; for I cannot perceive the smallest difference or division."

The conduct of Darnley at length became so outrageous that the health of the Queen was visibly affected. She fell into a profound melancholy ; and her state of mind and body is thus described in a letter from De Croc : " The Queen is for the present at Craigmillar, about a league distant from this city. She is in the hands of the physicians, and I do assure you is not at all well, and I do believe the principal part of her disease to consist of a deep grief and sorrow. Nor does it seem possible to make her forget the same. Still she repeats these

words, 'I could wish to be dead.' You know very well that the injury she has received is exceeding great, and her Majesty will never forget it."

At this point I conceive that the complicity of Bothwell begins. It is impossible to ascertain whether or not, in the first instance, Murray and Lethington confided to him their whole scheme, and induced him to become the principal actor in the murder of Darnley by offering to obtain for him the hand of the Queen. I think it probable that they advanced more cautiously, and in the manner set forth in the remarkable "Protestation of the Earls of Huntley and Argyle, Touching the Murther of the King of Scots," which in the year 1568 was forwarded to the Court of England, and which is published in Anderson's Collections. That narrative bears, that in December 1566, "Her Grace being in the Castle of Craigmillar, accompanied by us above written, and by the Earls of Bothwell, Murray, and Secretary Lethington, the said Earl of Murray and Lethington came in to the chamber of us, the Earl of Argyle, in the morning, we being in our bed ; who, lamenting the banishment of the Earl of Morton, Lords Lindsay and Ruthven, with the rest of their faction, said that the occasion of the murder of David, slain by them in presence of the Queen's Majesty, was for to trouble and impesche the Parlia-

ment, wherein the Earl of Murray and others should have been forfeited and declared rebels ; and seeing that this same was chiefly for the welfare of the Earl of Murray, it should be esteemed ingratitude if he and his friends, in reciprocal manner, did not interpose all that was possible for relief of the saids banished, wherefore they thought that we of our part should have been as desirous thereto as they were. And we agreeing to the same, to do all that was in us for their relief, providing that the Queen's Majesty should not be offended thereat. On this Lethington proponed and said, that the nearest and best way to obtain the said Earl of Morton's pardon was to promise to the Queen's Majesty to find a means to make divorcement betwixt her Grace and the King her husband, who had offended her Highness so highly in many ways. Whereunto we answering that we knew not how that might be done, Lethington said (the Earl of Murray being ever present), ' My Lord, care not you thereof. We shall find the means well enough to make her quit of him, so that you and my Lord of Huntley will only behold the matter, and not be offended thereat.' And then they send to my Lord of Huntley, praying him to come to our chamber. This is as they dealt with us particularly ; now let us show what followed after that we were assembled.

“ We, Earl of Huntley, being in that said chamber, the saids Earl of Murray and Lethington opened the matter likewise to us in manner foresaid, promising, if we would consent to the same, that they should find the means to restore us in our own lands and offices, and they to stand good friend unto us, and cause the said Earl of Morton, Ruthven, and all the rest of that company, to do the like in time coming. Our answer was, it should not stop by us that the matter come not to effect in all might be profitable and honourable both for them and us ; and specially where the pleasure, weal, and contentment of the Queen’s Majesty consisted. And thereon we four, viz. Earls of Huntley, Argyle, Murray, and Secretary Lethington, passed all to the Earl of Bothwell’s chamber to understand his advice on these things proponed, wherein he gainsaid not more than we. So therefore we passed all together toward the Queen’s Grace. Where Lethington—after he had reminded her Majesty of a great number of grievous and intolerable offences, that the King (as he said), ingrate of the honour received of her Highness, had done to her Grace, and continuing every day from evil to worse—proposed, That if it pleased her Majesty to pardon the Earl of Morton, Lords Ruthven and Lindsay, with their company, they should find the means, with the rest of the nobility,

to make divorcement betwixt her Highness and the King her husband, which should not need her Grace to *meddle* (meddle) therewith. To the which it was necessary that her Majesty take heed to make resolution therein, as well for his own easement as well of the realm ; for he troubled her Grace and us all ; and remaining with her Majesty, would not cease till he did her some other evil turn, when that her Highness would be mickle impesched to put remedy thereto. After these persuasions, and divers others which the said Lethington used, besides those that every one of us showed particularly to her Majesty, to bring her to the said purpose, her Grace answered, That under two conditions she might understand the same. The one that the divorce was made lawfully ; the other that it was not prejudice to her son, otherwise her Highness would rather endure all torments, and abide the perils that might chance her in her Grace's lifetime. The Earl of Bothwell answered : That he doubted not but the divorcement might be made without prejudice in any wise of my Lord Prince ; alleging the example of himself, that he ceased not to succeed to his father's heritage without any difficulty, albeit there was divorce betwixt him and his mother. It was also proposed that after their divorcement the King should remain alone in one part of the country, and the Queen's Majesty in another,

or else he should retire to another realm ; and hereon her Majesty said, that peradventure he would change opinion, that it were better that she herself for a time should pass to France, abiding till he acknowledged himself. Then Lethington, taking the speech, said : ‘ Madam, *soucy* (*i.e.* care) ye not : we are here of the principal of your Grace’s nobility and Council, that shall find the means that your Majesty shall be quit of him without prejudice of your son ; and albeit that my Lord of Murray here present be little less scrupulous for a Protestant than your Grace is for a Papist, I am assured he will look through his fingers thereto, and will behold our doings, saying nothing to the same.’ The Queen’s Majesty answered : ‘ I will that ye do nothing whereby any spot may be laid upon my honour or conscience, and therefore I pray you rather let the matter be in the estate as it is, abiding till God of His goodness put remedy thereto ; that ye, believing to do me service, may possibly turn to my hurt and displeasure.’ ‘ Madam,’ said Lethington, ‘ let us guide the matter amongst us, and your Grace shall see nothing but good, and approved by Parliament.’

“ So, after the premises, the murder of the said Henry Stuart following, we judge in our conscience, and hold for certain and truth, that the saids Earl of Murray and Secretary Lethington were authors,

inventors, devisers, councillors, and causers of the said murder, in what manner and by whatsoever persons the same was executed."

Mr Tytler, who has quoted part of the foregoing remarkable document in his *History of Scotland*, seems to think that the language used by Lethington conveyed a hint that Darnley might be got rid of by violent means. I am sure that, had he reflected for a moment, he would have seen the extreme absurdity of any such construction. Argyle and Huntley are telling what took place in their presence, and Lethington was their spokesman ; therefore, if this construction is to be put upon Maitland's language, the two Earls must be held as acknowledging their own complicity in the murderous design. That evidently was not their intention. Besides this, his closing words, referring to the approval of Parliament, utterly negative such an idea. The impression made upon me by the perusal of this document is, that Mary, though greatly and most justly incensed against Darnley, was unwilling to take the extreme step of a divorce ; partly because she feared that it might prejudice her son, and partly because she had not abandoned all hope of Darnley's reformation. Her language is that of pious resignation to the will of God, not of indignant anger.

It must also be remarked that there is nothing in this document to criminate Bothwell. He was the

last consulted ; and the only remark of his specially quoted, is an argument in favour of the proposed divorce. But if not an accomplice then, he became so immediately afterwards ; and there is little doubt that, before he left Craigmillar, he received a Band subscribed by persons of influence consenting to the murder of Darnley. That Band was probably among the private papers of Bothwell, which fell into the hands of Murray ; and if so, was of course destroyed. Its existence, and to a certain extent its tenor, were vouched for by Ormiston in his confession, reported by John Brand, Minister at Holyrood ; and as the passage is very curious, I shall transcribe it :—

“He (Bothwell) let me see a contract subscribed by four or five handwritings, which he affirmed to me was the subscription of the Earl of Huntley, Argyle, the Secretary Maitland, and Sir James Balfour, and alleged that many more promised who would assist him if he was put at : and thereafter read the said contract, which, as I remember, contained these words in effect—‘That inasmuch as it was thought expedient and most profitable for the common wealth, by the whole Nobility and Lords undersubscribed, that such a young fool and proud tyrant should not reign nor bear rule over them ; and that for divers causes therefore, that they all had concluded he should be put off, by one way or other ; and who-

soever should take the deed in hand, or do it, they should defend and fortify it as themselves; for it should be, by every one of their own, reckoned and holden done by themselves:’ Which writing, as the said Earl showed unto me, was devised by Sir James Balfour, subscribed by them all a quarter of a year before the deed was done.”

This confession, though it bears to be emitted by Ormiston, was not subscribed by him; but the writer states that it was read over to him in the presence of the Constable of the Castle of Edinburgh, and other persons of character; and I see no ground for doubting its authenticity. It contains a heavy charge against the Earls of Huntley and Argyle, and gives countenance to the idea that the nobility were nearly unanimous in consenting to the death of Darnley. When we consider that Mary’s principal accusers were the men most deeply implicated in the deed, what a fearful picture of treachery and turpitude is disclosed!

*“I stood that night in Darnley’s room,
Above the chamber charged with death.”—P. 94.*

MURDER OF DARNLEY.

The narrative contained in the third part of the poem will be found to correspond closely with the account

of the murder given by Bothwell's accomplices, Ormiston, Hay of Talla, and Hepburn of Bolton, in their examinations and confessions, which are printed at full length in Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*. Yet over some parts of this frightful tragedy there still hangs a cloud of mystery ; in particular, it appears impossible to ascertain whether Darnley perished by the explosion, or whether he was strangled in bed, or in the orchard when attempting to escape. There is strong evidence to support the latter view. On the following morning, his body, and that of his servant Taylor, were found lying under a tree, in an orchard, about eighty yards from the ruins. There were no marks of fire or of actual injury on his person ; and what is most remarkable, his furred pelisse and pantouffles were found close by. The bodies of four men, members of Darnley's household, were found crushed among the ruins. The only survivor, Thomas Nelson, was asleep when the explosion took place. Buchanan says that on that night there were three distinct bands of conspirators watching the house. Drury, writing not very long after to Cecil, makes an averment to the same effect, and specifies Ker of Fawdonside, the ruffian who, at the murder of Riccio, levelled a pistol at the Queen, as having been on horseback near the place, to aid in case of necessity. Drury further uses these significant words, "the King was long of dying,

and to his strength made debate for his life." Melville says, "it was spoken that the King was taken forth, and brought down to a stable, where a napkin was stopped in his mouth, and he therewith suffocated." Herries' account is different, but very circumstantial. He says that Bothwell, after leaving Holyrood, "went straight to the Kirk-of-Field, up Robloch's Wynd, where he met with William Parris and John Hamilton (a servant to the Archbishop of St Andrews), who had stolen the keys of the gates. They entered softly the King's chamber, and found him asleep, where they both strangled him and his man, William Taylor, that lay by him on a pallet-bed. Those assassins that are named to be with Bothwell, and actors, were those two above named, Parris and Hamilton, John Hay of Talla, John Hepburn of Bolton, George Dalgleish, and one Powrie, Bothwell's men all; James Ormiston of that Ilk (called Black Ormiston), Hob Ormiston, and Patrick Wilson. After they had strangled the King and his man dead, they carried them both out at a back gate of the town wall, which opened at the back of the house, and laid them both down carelessly, one from another, and then fired some barrels of powder which they had put in the room below the King's chamber; which, with a great noise, blew up the house. They imagined the people would conceive the house to be blown up by accident,

and the corpse of the King and his man to be blown over the wall by the force of the powder. But neither were their shirts singet, nor their clothes burned (which were likeways laid by them), nor their skins anything touched by fire ; which gave easie satisfaction to all that looked upon them."

My own conviction is that Darnley was strangled in the orchard while attempting to escape ; that he had been awakened either by the sound of the locking of the door, or by the smell of the burning fuse, which, Bolton says, was lighted for a quarter of an hour before the explosion took place ; and that, in his haste, he had caught up the garments which were found beside his corpse. I do not see how it is possible to account otherwise for the appearance of the bodies and the scattering of the dress. For let it be supposed possible that the bodies could be blown through the roof, and cast such a distance into the orchard, without presenting any visible marks, still no one can believe that loose articles of dress could be carried there by the explosion. I think that the real details of the murder, from whatsoever source they might have come, were known to Drury ; for the accuracy of the information obtained by the agents of Elizabeth with regard to every important event in Scotland is truly wonderful. But if Darnley was murdered in the orchard, and not in the house, I must

also conclude that other actors, unknown to Bothwell and his men, were engaged in the villanous work.

Bolton and Talla, who confessed to having put the powder in the house, fired the match, and locked the door behind them, averred, both in their depositions when examined, and in their confessions before execution, that there were but nine of their company, and that they neither saw nor knew of any others. The nine were Bothwell, two Ormiston, Bolton, Talla, Dalglish, Wilson, Powrie, and French Paris. And the confession of Bolton, corroborated by that of Talla, bears, "He knows no others, but that he (Darnley) was blown in the air ; for he was handled with no man's hands as he saw ; and if he was, it was with others, and not with them." They both concur in saying that the two Ormiston went away after the powder was put in, the Queen being then in the house with Darnley, and that they did not return ; which tallies perfectly with the account given by Ormiston in his confession, for he says that the clock struck ten as he returned to his lodging, "to avoid suspicion, that no man should say I was at the deed-doing ; for I was an hour and more in my bed before the blast and crack was." Wilson and Powrie were mere servants, who brought the powder, by order of Bolton, and having delivered it, returned to the Abbey, where they waited, until

summoned by Bothwell to go with him to the Kirk-of-Field. They were carrying back the mail and trunk in which the powder had been conveyed, when, "as they came up the Black Friar Wynd, the Queen's grace was going before them with light torches." This marks the time of their departure. Dalglish, Bothwell's groom of the chamber, was not at the Kirk-of-Field in the earlier part of the night, and only witnessed the catastrophe. Paris went away at the same time as Ormiston, but he seems to have returned to witness the explosion. This man, whose real name was Nicholas Hubert, and who had previously been in Bothwell's service, was the party who furnished the keys. There is, however, trace of one other person, Archibald Betoun, who was Queen's usher, and the proper custodier of the room in which the powder was placed. Nelson, the sole survivor of the explosion, deponed that this Betoun had the keys; and Ormiston, in his confession, says that "Archie Betoun" was along with Paris while they were preparing to lay down the fuse. But apart from this, all the confederates and servants of Bothwell, who were executed for their share in the murder, declared that they knew of no others present at or concerned in the deed. Neither Ormiston, nor Bolton, nor Talla could have any motive or interest in giving a false account; for they all three admit-

ted that they were principal actors in causing the explosion, 'by which they evidently thought that Darnley perished.

Powrie, however, stated in his deposition that when he and Wilson brought the powder to the gate at the entrance of the Black Friars, there were with Bothwell two strangers "who had cloaks about their faces;" and upon being re-examined, he said that the Earl Bothwell came to them at the gate, "accompanied with three more, who had their cloaks, and 'mules' upon their feet." Mules were large slippers, worn to prevent the tread of the feet from being heard. From evidence given at a much later trial, it appears extremely probable that one of these strangers was Archibald Douglas, Parson of Glasgow, a near relative of Morton. But whoever they were, they had departed by ten o'clock; and both Hepburn of Bolton and Hay of Talla, who were in the house "till after two hours after midnight," when the match was lighted, say positively in their depositions that they knew of no others concerned, save the nine in their company. It is quite possible that their depositions may have been altered to suit the purposes of Murray and Morton, before whom they were emitted; but there is no evidence to that effect, and we must take them as they stand. If their depositions are entitled to credence, they estab-

lish this much, that these two men, as well as Bothwell, believed that Darnley was asleep in the house when the explosion took place, and that no other company was on the watch.

But (as Miss Strickland, who has taken great pains in the investigation of this point, has shown), it appears from depositions recently discovered in the General Register House of Edinburgh, that on that night two detachments of men, one of eight, and the other of eleven (two of whom were in armour), were seen hurrying from the Kirk-of-Field immediately before and after the explosion. There is thus evidence that another party, besides that of Bothwell, was on the watch ; and this circumstance strongly corroborates the account of the murder which was sent by Drury to Cecil.

These complications may appear to the casual reader unnatural and overstrained ; for at first sight it seems extremely improbable that two bodies of conspirators should have been sent on the same errand, without the one being cognisant of the presence of the other. But then it must be kept in view that the main object of the other conspirators was to implicate Bothwell, and to avoid anything that might leave a trace of their participation in the deed. Murray found it convenient to go over to Fife on the morning before the murder, selecting Sunday as his

travelling day, which assuredly was a great lapse in so rigid a professor of Calvinism. Morton was at St Andrews. His kinsman, Archibald Douglas, was indeed in the plot, as the Earl long afterwards confessed on the eve of his execution, and had told him of the purpose ; but then, as he said to the inquisitive ministers, "Mr Archibald at that time was a depender of the Earl of Bothwell, making court for himself, rather than a depender of mine." In short, the leading conspirators were desirous of two things—first, that Darnley should be effectually disposed of ; and, secondly, that the whole blame should rest on the shoulders of Bothwell—and they took their measures accordingly.

It seems very clear that they had not much faith in Bothwell's dexterity ; for they made provision, unknown to him, that he should not blunder in the execution of his design. From Bolton's deposition and Ormiston's confession it would appear that, until two days before the murder took place, Bothwell understood that Darnley was to be disposed of in a different manner—viz. that each conspiring nobleman was to send "two servants to the doing thereof, either in the fields or otherwise, as he may be apprehended." "But," said Bolton, "within two days before the murder the said Earl changed purpose of the slaying of the King in the fields, because then it would be

known ; and showed to them (Ormiston, Bolton, and Talla) what way it might be used better by the powder." Now, as to the quantity of powder used. That was contained in a trunk and a mail or port-manteau, and was brought by Powrie and Wilson from the Earl's lodging in Holyrood to the Black Friars gate, where it was handed over to Bolton and Talla. It was in bags, and was poured out loose on the floor of the room below Darnley's chamber. All that is distinctly proven. Bolton and Talla, after lighting the match—a soldier's fuse "of half a fathom or thereby,"—locked the door, and joined Bothwell outside ; and so long was it until the explosion took place, that Bothwell could hardly be restrained from entering the house to ascertain whether the match had not failed. When it came, the explosion was awful. Not only the upper part of the house, but the whole fabric, from the foundation-stones, was heaved into air. French Paris said, it was like a tempest or a thunder-peal, and that for fear thereof he fell to the ground, with every hair of his head standing up like awls ! To use the language of the Privy Council, the house was "dung into dross." The same phrase is used in Mary's letter to Archbishop Betoun (Labanoff, vol. ii. p. 3). "The matter is so horrible and so strange, as we believe the like was never heard of in any country. This night

past, being the 9th February, a little after two hours after midnight, the house wherein the King was lodged was in an instant blown in the air, he lying sleeping in his bed, with such a vehemency that of the whole lodging, walls and other, there is nothing remaining—no, not a stone above another, but all other carried far away, or dung in dross to the very ground-stone.” In the first volume of Chalmers’s *Life of Queen Mary* there is a fac-simile of a drawing, taken at the time, of the ruins, which entirely corroborates the statement that the house was blown up from the very foundations. I do not pretend to be a master of the theory of explosive forces, but I have asked the opinion of some competent judges, and I am assured, that if the facts above stated regarding the quantity of powder deposited by Bothwell’s people are correct, it is absolutely impossible that the house could have been so demolished from the foundation. Here, then, is another mystery. Bothwell’s only agents were the men specially named; and they did nothing more than bring to the Kirk-of-Field, on the night of the murder, a quantity of powder quite inadequate to produce the actual result. The house had been previously undermined. There was no difficulty in doing this, for the house of Kirk-of-Field belonged to Robert Balfour, brother of Sir James Balfour, who drew the original Band for the

King's death, and he was entirely in the hands of Lethington. This is not a mere hypothesis, for the fact rests upon undeniable evidence ; and it is proved that both Sir James Balfour and Archibald Douglas sent powder for the purpose. Miss Strickland has the great merit of having brought together, in little compass, all the evidence upon that point. That such were the operations of the conspirators is also evident from the terms of the indictment raised against Morton in 1581, in which it is set forth that he "most vilely, unmercifully, and treasonably slew and murdered him (Darnley), with William Taylor and Andrew MacKaig, his cubiculars (grooms), when as they, buried in sleep, were taking the night's rest, burned his hail lodging foresaid, and raised the same in the air by force of gunpowder, which a little before was placed and in put by him and his foresaids *under the ground, and angular stands, and within the vaults, laigh and derne parts and places thereof, to that effect.*"

These operations, however, seem to have been studiously concealed from Bothwell ; nor was the idea of blowing up the house suggested to him until two days before the period fixed for the murder. Like many other men of action, Bothwell was infirm of purpose and liable to be imposed on, as indeed his whole history shows, and he fell at once into the snare. But he never was informed that the house

was already undermined—for this reason, that the other conspirators calculated on his taking such steps as would avert suspicion from themselves. And so it proved : for the powder, conveyed to the Kirk-of-Field in the trunk and valise, was brought on the Saturday, by Bothwell's order, from the magazine at Dunbar, of which he was keeper, to his apartments in Holyrood—was carried by his own servants, and laid down by his own associates—things which could not be done so secretly as to defy detection. In consequence, he was looked upon as the sole deviser of the murder, which, however, there are strong grounds for believing was not perpetrated by his means.

*“ And pictures on the Cross were hung
Of him who died at Kirk-of-Field.”—P. 110.*

POLITICAL CARICATURES—“THE MERMAID.”

“ Among other cruel devices practised against Mary at this season by her cowardly assailants, was the dissemination of gross personal caricatures, which, like the placards charging her as an accomplice in her husband's murder, were fixed on the doors of churches and other public places in Edinburgh. Rewards were vainly offered for the discovery of the limners by whom these treasonable painted tickets, as they were

styled in the proclamations, were designed. Mary was peculiarly annoyed at one of these productions, called 'The Mermaid,' which represented her in the character of a crowned syren, with a sceptre formed of a fish's tail in her hand, and flanked with the regal initials M. R. This curious specimen of party malignity is still preserved in the State Paper Office." —MISS STRICKLAND'S *Life of Queen Mary*.

I recommend this passage to the notice of future commentators on Shakespeare ; because it appears to me very strongly to corroborate the idea originally started by Warburton, that the following well-known lines in the "Midsummer Night's Dream" were meant to apply to Mary :—

"My gentle Puck, come hither : Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music."

This theory of Warburton's led to an animated controversy, his opponents declaring that they were unable to understand why Mary should be allegorised as a mermaid. Here is historical evidence that she was so represented many years before Shakespeare wrote.

*“ Right hastily the ermined lords
Pronounced me innocent and free.”—P. 117.*

TRIAL OF BOTHWELL.

The trial of Bothwell was a mere sham and mockery of justice. The management of it was left to Lethington, Morton, Huntley, and Argyle, of whom two at least were participators in Darnley's murder, while Huntley was the brother-in-law of Bothwell. “The whole proceedings,” says Mr Tytler, “had already been arranged in a council, held some little time before, in which Bothwell had taken his seat, and given directions regarding his own arraignment. The jury consisted principally, if not wholly, of the favourers of the Earl ; the law-officers of the Crown were either in his interest, or overawed into silence ; no witnesses were summoned ; the indictment was framed with a flaw too manifest to be accidental ; and his accuser, the Earl of Lennox, who was on his road to the city, surrounded by a large force of his friends, had received an order not to enter the town with more than six in his company.” Morton and Lethington rode with Bothwell to the Tolbooth, where the trial took place. He was attended by two hundred harquebussiers, and escorted by up-

wards of *four thousand* gentlemen ; and so he passed “ with a merry and lusty cheer ” to the Tolbooth.

This was upon the 12th of April, more than two months after the murder, during which time the common people had been thoroughly impressed with the conviction that Bothwell was the real assassin, and that the Queen was privy to the design. In fact, the public mind was in a state of violent excitement. Murray, as was his custom on the approach of any crisis when his presence might have inconvenient results for himself, left Edinburgh three days before the trial ; but his faction to a man supported Bothwell. This latter circumstance ought especially to be borne in mind, because it shows that Bothwell was not deserted by the nobility on account of his participation in the slaughter of Darnley. No new fact relating to that matter emerged between the day of his trial and that when he fled from Carberry Hill ; no divulgements of further or concealed evidence were made. The voluntary escort of four thousand gentlemen to his trial, is an unequivocal proof of the strength of his position at the time.

He was not deserted because the confederates believed him to be guilty of the murder of Darnley. They knew him to be guilty, but in the mean time, instead of deserting, they supported him ; because through his means, and by stimulating his exorbitant ambition,

they expected to accomplish their great design, which was the overthrow and ruin of the Queen. Their next advance in that direction is referred to in the note immediately following.

“They gave it me—that fatal Band.”—P. 128.

BAND MADE BY A NUMBER OF THE NOBILITY IN
FAVOUR OF THE EARL OF BOTHWELL,
19TH APRIL 1567.

“We undersubscribing, understanding, that altho’ the noble and mighty Lord James Earl Bothwell, Lord Hailes, Crichton, and Liddesdale, Great Admiral of Scotland, and Lieutenant to our Sovereign Lady over all the Marches thereof, being not only bruited and calumniated by placards privily affixed on the public places of the Kirk of Edinburgh, and otherwise slandered by his evil willers and privy Enemies, as Art and Part of the heinous Murder of the King, the Queen’s Majesty’s late Husband, but also by special Letters sent to her Highness by the Earl of Lennox, and dilated of the same crime, who in his Letters earnestly desired and required the said Earl Bothwell to be tried of the said murder,—he, by condign Inquest and Assize of certain Noble-

men his Peers, and other Barons of good reputation, is found guiltless and innocent of the odious crime objected to him, and acquitted thereof, conform to the Laws of this Realm ; who also, for further trial of his part, has offered himself readie to defend and maintain his innocence against all that will impugn the same by the Law of Arms, and so has omitted nothing for the perfect trial of his accusation, that any Nobleman of honour, or by the Laws ought to underlie and accomplish. And We considering the Ancientness and Nobleness of his House, the honourable and good service done by his predecessors, and specially by himself, to our Sovereign, and for the defence of this her Highness' Realm against the enemies thereof, and the Amity and Friendship which so long has persevered betwixt his House and every one of us, and others our Predecessors in particular ; and therewithal seeing how all Noblemen, being in reputation, honour, and credit with their Sovereign, are commonly subject to sustain as well the vain bruits of the inconstant common people, as the accusations and calumnies of their adversaries, envious of our Place and Vocation, which we of our duty and friendship are astricted and debt-bound to repress and withstand ; THEREFORE oblige us, and each one of us, upon our Faith and Honours, and Truth in our bodies, as we are Noblemen, and will

answer to God, that in case hereafter any manner of person or persons, in whatsoever manner, shall happen to insist further to the slander and calumny of the said Earl of Bothwell, as participant, Art or Part, of the said heinous murder, whereof ordinary Justice has acquitted him, and for which he has offered to do his Devoir by the Law of Arms in manner above rehearsed ; we, and every one of us, by ourselves, our kin, friends, assisters, partakers, and all that will do for us, shall take true, honest, plain, and upright Part with him, to the Defence and Maintenance of his Quarrell, with our bodies, heritage, and goods, against his private or public calumniators, byepast or to come, or any others presuming anything in Word or Deed to his Reproach, Dishonour, or Infamy. MOREOVER, weighing and considering the time present, and how our Sovereign the Queen's Majesty is now destitute of a Husband, in the which solitary state the Commonweal of this Realme may not permit her Highness to continue and endure, but at some time her Highness in appearance may be inclined to yield into a Marriage ; and therefore, in case the former affectionate and hearty service of the said Earl done to her Majesty from time to time, and his other good Qualities and Behaviour, may move her Majesty so far to humble herself, as, preferring one of her native-born subjects unto all

foreign Princes, to take to Husband the said Earl, We and every one of us undersubscribing, upon our Honours and Fidelity, oblige us and promise, not only to further, advance, and set forward the Marriage to be solemnised and completed betwixt her Highness and the said Noble Lord, with our Votes, Counsel, Fortification, and Assistance in Word and Deed, at such time as it shall please her Majesty to think it convenient, and how soon the Laws shall leave it to be done ; but in case any should presume directly or indirectly, openly, or under whatsoever Colour or Pretence, to hinder, hold back, or disturb the said Marriage, we shall, in that behalf, esteem, hold, and repute the Hinderers, Adversaries, or Disturbers thereof, as our common Enemies and evil Willers ; and notwithstanding the same, take part and fortify the said Earl to the said Marriage, so far as it may please our Sovereign Lady to allow ; and therein shall spend and bestow our Lives and Goods against all that live or die may, as we shall answer to God, and upon our own Fidelities and Conscience ; and in case we do to the contrary, never to have Reputation or Credit in no Time hereafter, but to be accounted unworthy and faithless Traitors. In Witness whereof, we have subscribed these presents, as follows, at Edinburgh, the 19th day of April, the year of God 1567 years."

Such was the tenor and substance of that celebrated "Band," the origin and object of which has given rise to so much discussion. But the historian or annotator who attempts the investigation of any point in this distracted period of Scottish annals, must exercise the utmost caution before adopting as genuine any kind of documentary evidence, so artfully have many papers been altered or perverted to suit the views or to maintain the credit of the chief actors in political intrigue. In this instance there seems no ground for supposing that material alteration has been made in the body of the Band by copyists or transcribers. The points in dispute, however, are very important, as they involve the circumstances under which the Band was granted, and the status, character, and even individuality of the subscribers. The story commonly received—but which I entirely discredit, for reasons which I shall immediately state—is as follows: The Band in question is said to have been subscribed after a supper to which Bothwell had invited the whole of the nobility in Edinburgh, on the occasion of the dismissal of Parliament. According to this version, the entertainment was given at a tavern kept by a person of the name of Ansley or Ainslie; and Mr Tytler, who seems in this instance to have departed from his usual accurate habit of investigation, gives us the following narrative:

“On the evening of the day on which the Parliament rose (April 19th), Bothwell invited the principal nobility to supper in a tavern kept by a person named Ansley. They sat drinking till a late hour ; and during the entertainment a band of two hundred hagbutters surrounded the house and overawed its inmates. The Earl then rose, and proposed his marriage with the Queen, affirming that he had gained her consent, and even (it is said) producing her written warrant empowering him to propose the matter to her nobility. Of the guests some were his sworn friends, others were terrified and irresolute ; and in the confusion one nobleman, the Earl of Eglinton, contrived to make his escape ; but the rest, both Papist and Protestant, were overawed into compliance, and affixed their signatures to a bond.” The foundation of the story is to be found in a letter to Queen Elizabeth from her Commissioners at York, dated 11th October 1568, and printed both by Anderson and Goodall. It contains the account of the transaction, or rather the explanation of the signatures, as given on the part of Murray and his colleagues, some of whom were parties to the bond. “It appeared also,” say the commissioners, “that the self-same day of the date of this Band, being the 19th of April, the Earl of Huntley was restored by Parliament, which Parliament was the occasion that so many Lords were

there assembled, which being all invited to a supper by Bothwell, were induced after supper, more for fear than otherwise, to subscribe to the said Band; two hundred harkebusiers being in the Court and about the Chamber door where they supped, which were all at Bothwell's devotion." Ainslie, "mine host," owes his immortality to a document, a copy of which is in the Cottonian Library under this heading, "The names of such of the nobility as subscribed the Band, so far as John Read might remember, of whom I had this copy, being in his own hand, being commonly termed in Scotland AYSLEIS SUPPER."

The list is as follows:—

"EARLS Murray, Argyle, Huntley, Cassillis, Morton, Sutherland, Rothes, Glencairn, Caithness.

"LORDS Boyd, Seton, Sinclair, Semple, Oliphant, Ogilvy, Ross of Hawkhead, Carlyle, Herries, Hume, Innermeith.

"Eglinton subscribed not, but slipped away."

But the memory of "John Read," whom I strongly suspect to have been an amanuensis of George Buchanan, cannot have been of the most reliable kind, inasmuch as Murray could by no possibility have signed the Band, for this simple reason, that he was not in Scotland at the time. This authority, such as it is, has imposed not only on Mr Tytler, but on Miss Strickland, who, in her recent elaborate and

most valuable Life of Queen Mary, repeats the story *ad longum*, and, in her surprise at finding the names of Seton and Herries appended to the Band, hazards the conjecture, "that they must have drunk to excess, and signed it when under the temporary delirium of intoxication!"

In Schiller's grand political drama of *Wallenstein*, the Imperialist generals are represented as signing, after supper, a fabricated bond, differing materially in substance from that which had been exhibited before the commencement of the convivialities. But at Ainslie's tavern the transaction is wholly of another character. Eight Earls and eleven Barons, of all shades of political and religious opinion, are said to have been invited by Bothwell to supper—not in some remote chateau, with its dungeon and *oubliette*, but in a public inn, in the heart of populous Edinburgh. We are then asked to believe that a couple of hundred armed desperadoes beset the courtyard and the stairs—that Bothwell drew from his pocket the document ready prepared—and that the nineteen noble poltroons signed it without remonstrance or hesitation!

"Credat Judæus Apella,
Non ego——"

What, it may be inquired, had the nobles to fear

if they refused compliance? Not massacre, surely, for that would have effectually extinguished all the hopes and prospects of Bothwell; not abduction, for that would have been impossible, considering the locality. There is no difficulty in accounting for the signature of some of the Peers, who were conspirators, and therefore ready enough to sign without compulsion; but there were others, such as Glencairn, Seton, and Oliphant, little likely, under any circumstances, to have submitted to such insolent dictation. But even granting that they had been constrained, it is a very singular and significant fact, that none of them deemed it necessary at an after period to offer an explanation in order to clear their characters from so very serious a stain. A skilful artisan of romance would hardly have dared, in defiance of all probability, to depict such a scene in his pages. Grave historians, however, have not hesitated to stand sponsors for the story.

That Bothwell may have entertained his friends at supper in Ainslie's tavern, on the occasion of the dismissal of Parliament, is quite possible—but that the signatures were then extorted and given, appears to me, from intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, as preposterous a fiction as ever was devised. Bishop Keith states that there is, or was in his time, in the Scottish College at Paris, another copy of this Band,

“attested by the proper subscription of Sir James Balfour of Pittendrich, the Clerk of Register and Privy-Council at the time the Band was formed, who had the original in his keeping.” That copy bears date the 20th, not the 19th April, and the following are the parties subscribing :—The Archbishop of St Andrews ; the Bishops of Aberdeen, Galloway, Dumblane, Brechin, Ross, the Isles, and Orkney ; the Earls of Huntley, Argyle, Morton, Cassillis, Sutherland, Errol, Crawford, Caithness, and Rothes ; the Lords Boyd, Glamis, Ruthven, Semple, Herries, Ogilvy, and Fleming. This is a very different list from that which “John Read” sets down from memory. Its accuracy may, like that of the other, be impugned, but it does not shock credibility. Boyd was a waverer, who, after the Queen’s marriage, joined the confederacy against her, but afterwards came over to her side. Herries, according to Mr Tytler, was not to be trusted when his own interests came in the way. And it is certain that not one of the nobles on that list repaired to the standard of Queen Mary previous to the affair at Carberry Hill. Bothwell, in his Memorial to the King of Denmark, penned after he was a fugitive, states that, on his acquittal, twenty-eight members of Parliament came to him at his own house without solicitation, offering him their support towards the furtherance of his

marriage with the Queen, *and that of these, eight were bishops.* I admit that Bothwell's own statements are entitled to very little respect, but his averment as to the concurrence of the bishops is worthy of notice. It is not difficult to understand the reason why, in the communications made to Elizabeth's commissioners, all mention of the bishops' signatures was suppressed ; for Buchanan, though endowed with preternatural impudence, could scarcely have hoped to persuade the Duke of Norfolk that Bothwell had decoyed eight prelates into a tavern, and there, under the influence of drink and terror, compelled them to set their names to a bond, recognising him as a proper match for their sovereign ! In the introductory letter to the Memoirs of Sir James Melville, addressed to his son, there occurs this significant passage, which I have never seen quoted, but which appears to me very decisive against the authenticity of the Ainslie Legend : " Had I not more regarded my Princess her interest than mine own, I should have accepted the large offers made to me by the Earl of Bothwell, *when he desired me to subscribe, with the rest of his flatterers, that paper wherein they declared it was her Majesty's interest to marry the said Earl ;* but I chose rather to lay myself open to his hatred and revenge, whereby I was afterward in peril of my life." This evidently points to a delibe-

rate and studied attempt, not to a drunken surprise. Bothwell was a daring and unscrupulous villain—not a wise man, yet certainly not an idiot; and he never would have resorted to a device, which, so far from promoting his object, must have led to his immediate destruction.

My conclusion therefore is, that the terms of the Band were arranged between Bothwell and the lords of the faction of Murray and Morton, with whom he was then acting in apparent concert. It was part of their regular scheme; for Bothwell would not have been seduced from his allegiance without very distinct promises made by his tempters. Their object in signing the Band was to fortify Bothwell in his pretensions to the hand of the Queen, they being aware that such a marriage would be the signal for insurrection, and inevitably lead to her deposition. That marriage was the bribe, by means of which they had induced Bothwell to become the principal actor in the murder of Darnley, and it was also their interest to keep faith with him, until he was installed as Darnley's successor; after that he was to be hunted down. It seems established, moreover, that this Band was signed by a considerable number of the nobility who did not belong to the faction, but who may have given their names partly from example and partly from interest. I very much fear, however,

that no one who subscribed the deed had any faith in Bothwell's innocence. Darnley had made himself so obnoxious to the whole nobility, that his removal was regarded in the light of a state necessity; and in those days men were not over-scrupulous or inquisitive as to the means which were employed for an end which they approved. Some, who knew Bothwell's violent temper, may have had no better reason for signing than a vague dread of his resentment, but I think there is no ground for supposing that in any case there was an extortion of signatures.

I may here remark, that lists, such as that drawn up from the recollection of "John Read," ought not to be relied on as authentic historical documents. Mr Tytler has been blamed, and I think deservedly, for preferring a charge against Knox, of complicity in the murder of Riccio, founded upon a document in the State-paper Office. It is highly probable, as Dr M'Crie allows, that Knox regarded that event with satisfaction; and his disappearance from Scotland immediately after the assassination, coupled with the fact that he did not return to Edinburgh until Mary was imprisoned and her enemies triumphant, has naturally enough engendered suspicion. Grave doubts may be entertained as to his innocence; but I am bound to say that, in a question of this kind, no weight ought to be given to a paper which is un-

signed, and not satisfactorily authenticated. I am clearly of opinion that the list referred to by Mr Tytler cannot be accepted as reliable evidence that Knox was one of the actual conspirators. In that list, "John Craig, preacher," is set down as having consented, along with Knox, to the death of Riccio ; and the evidence which would condemn the one, must be held to apply to the other. Yet no writer has ventured to maintain that Craig had any previous knowledge of the murder. He was the colleague of Knox in the ministerial charge of Edinburgh, but did not quit his post when those who were notoriously concerned in the assassination of Riccio were compelled to seek safety in flight ; and his subsequent demeanour and bearing, as well as his high and really admirable character, seem to me utterly inconsistent with the idea that he was privy to that act of violence and blood. Indeed, I have a strong conviction that there was less real confidence than is generally supposed to have existed between the nobles who professed the cause of the Reformation and the preachers ; and that the latter were seldom consulted with regard to political movements, however much their influence with the people may have been used to forward them.

*"Your own brave father woo'd a Queen—
This Mary's mother."*—P. 131.

PATRICK EARL BOTHWELL, AND MARY OF GUISE.

There is a remarkable coincidence in the leading points of the personal history of the two Bothwells, father and son. Both of them paid their addresses to Scottish Queens; both divorced their wives with a view to the more ambitious marriage; both received crown-grants of Orkney; and both died in exile. During the lifetime of James V., Earl Patrick was suspected of treasonable practices with England, and in 1531 was imprisoned in the Castle of Edinburgh, and afterwards, according to Pitscottie, banished from the kingdom. He returned, however, after the death of James, and paid court to the Queen-Dowager, his rival being the Earl of Lennox. But his suit did not prosper, notwithstanding the apparent encouragement which he received from Mary of Guise, a woman of great talent, who possessed in an uncommon degree the power of fascinating all who approached her. I am enabled, through the kindness of my friend Mr Joseph Robertson, of the General Register House, Edinburgh, to make public a curious document, prepared by Earl Patrick for the consideration of the King of France, in which he

asserts that the Queen-Dowager had twice promised him marriage.

“THIR ar the articlis that Patrik Erle Boithuile, greit admirall of Scotland, promissis to bid at and debait with his body ; That is to say, ane hundreth men for ane hundreth men, or man for man, as the King of Frances Maieste will pleis command him thairto.

“In primis, that the Quenis Grace, his auld maistress, for his continewale service done for the tyme, and for eschewing of sic inconvenient cummeris that apperit to fall vpoun hir, Promest faithfullie be hir hand writ at twa sindre tymes to tak the said Erle in mariage ; Hir taiking deliuerit to him thairupoune, and day assignit thairto, as her writingis obligatouris vnder hir hand writ mair fullie propertis.

“Secundlie, scho gaif to the said Erle the erledome of Fiff during hir lifetyme, for service done and to be done, As hir eidentis maid to him thair of propertis.

“Thirdlie, scho gaif to the said Erle fre the lordship of Galloway, elike maner induring hir lifetyme.

“Fferdlie, scho gaif to the said Erle the erledome of Orkney during hir lifetyme for payment, Reservand ane thousand merk thair of at the said Erles dispositioun in feis quhair he plesit.

“Alswa, scho is awand to the said Erle foure thowsand crownis, And gaif in command to the Ambassatour passand for the tyme to France to answer Maister Michell Balfour, seruitour to the said Erle, twa thowsand crownis, and incontinent thaireftir send the post with ane discharge.

“The said Erle desyris thir articlis to be presentit vnto the King of Frances Maieste ; And for verificatioun hereof, And clering of all promissis allegit maid be him to Ingland afore the day of the dait hereof, Offeris him to cum to France or Scotland, quhair it pleissis the Kingis Maieste of France to appunct, To debait the samin with his body againis all thaim will say in the contrair, That he nevir did afore the said day that micht be prejudiciall to the realme of Scotland. In witnes hereof, and for verificatioun of the premissis, he has subscriuit thir presentis with his hand, At Armetage the first day of Aprile, the yere of God ane thowsand five hundreth fourtynyne yeris.

“ERLE BOTHUILE,
Amirall.”

As this document is preserved in the Register House of Edinburgh, we may presume that it never was forwarded to France. Very shortly afterwards, Earl Patrick formally renounced his allegiance, and became a pensioner of England, as appears in an instrument of King Edward VI., dated at Westminster, 3d September 1549. "Whereas Patrick, Earl of Bothwell, has acknowledged his duty to us, his natural sovereign lord and King, superior lord of the realm of Scotland, we have taken him, his castles, towers, lands, tenements, rents, goods, and cattals, men-servants, and retainers into our protection and defence ; and we grant to him an annuity of yearly rent of 3000 crowns, and the wages of 100 horsemen, to serve under him for the defence of his person and the annoying of the enemy ; and if it shall fortune him, by means of our service, to lose his lands and possessions in Scotland above the space of three years, we promise to give and grant to him and his heirs for ever lands and tenements to the yearly rent and value of all such lands, &c., as from this day forward he shall lose by reason of his service." We find him, however, again in Scotland, and in attendance on the Queen-Dowager in 1554. He appears to have died in 1556, when he was succeeded by his son James.

I have noted these particulars, because even by old writers, such as Buchanan and Herries, the two Bothwells have been confounded ; so much so, that

a dissertation was written by Patrick Lord Elibank, to prove that the rival of Lennox in the favour of Mary of Guise, and the husband of her daughter Mary, Queen of Scots, was one and the same person. Hence have arisen the extraordinary discrepancies of statement regarding the age of James Earl of Bothwell, which have puzzled so many readers of history. Bothwell was certainly little more than twenty years of age when his father died ; consequently he must have been about twenty-six when he first paid his duty to the Queen at Joinville in 1561, and about thirty-two when he carried her off to Dunbar.

Strange to say, it appears that another of the house of Hepburn, Adam, Master of Hales, father of the first Earl of Bothwell, had an intrigue with another Queen-Dowager of Scotland, Mary of Gueldres, widow of James II. The authorities upon which that statement has been made, will be found in the first volume of Pinkerton's *History of Scotland*.

*"How many churches wrapt in flames,
Have witnessed to the spoiler's power."*—P. 157.

DEMOLITION OF CHURCHES BY THE REFORMERS.

"Now arises tumults upon tumults, killing of priests, sacking and pulling down of Churches, ruining of stately Abbacies, and other glorious buildings,

dissolving hospitals ; all in confusion. In a word, these ancient buildings and brave fabrics, monuments of antiquity and marks of piety, which for many hundred years have been a-building, shall in few months be destroyed and razed to the ground ! The ornaments and riches of the Churches fell to the share of the common rabble ; the estates and lands were divided amongst the great men, by themselves, without right or law ; which they resolve to maintain by the sword !

“The first storm fell upon Saint Johnstoun, in this same month of May. John Knox (of whom we spoke before, who had been minister to these rebels in the castle of St Andrews) was the occasion ; who, by a seditious sermon, stirred up the people to fury and madness ; who encouraged them to pull down the Churches ; for in his sermon he bid them ‘Pull down the nests that the crows might not build again !’ Whereupon they run out in confusion, killed the priests, broke down altars, and destroyed all the images and ornaments. From that they fell upon the Religious Houses and Monasteries ; those two goodly Abbacies of Franciscans and Dominicans, with their Churches, were pulled down and made level with the ground in two days, and all their riches made a prey to the people ! But the Abbay of Charters Monks stood longer by one day. The

next storm fell upon Couper. Those people, upon notice of this business at Perth, fell likewise upon their Churches ; which they spoiled and ransackt, and chased away the priests."

" When the news was known that Lord James and the Earl of Argyle had deserted the Queen-Regent, and joined themselves to the Congregation, the people were so much encouradged that they flockt in multitudes. Then a declaration was put out, by which it was declared, That the cause of their rising in arms was for defence of the cause of God, their religion, and liberty, and lives, that were all in eminent danger by the false dealing of the Queen-Regent, whom neither Bands, religion, nor solemn oaths could bind : That she was a breaker of truth and faith : That she was a stranger who had no respect to the well of Scotland. These words being declared to the people by John Knox, they grew so exasperatt that they were ready to attempt anything. They run in confusion to the town of Crail, and fell upon the Church, which they ransackt and spoiled. From thence to St Androes, and there they spoiled all ; and not content with the spoil of the whole Churches and Monasteries, they pulled down the very walls of the Grey and Black Friers' Monasteries, goodlie things, and of great antiquity ; and chased the Archbishop himself out of the toune."

“This being refused, the Congregation marches directly to Perth, and besieges the town, which was rendered within few days. Then the Laird of Kinfauns (whom the Queen-Regent had made Provost) was displaced, and the Lord Ruthven was again admitted. Then they send a strong party over to Scone, who ransackt and defaced the Churches, broke down the altars and images, and destroyed the whole ornaments and ancient monuments, and so retired. Upon the other hand, Lord James and the Earl of Argyle marched to Stirling, and served the Churches there with the like fare ; and razes the Monasterie of Black Friars to the ground. The next day they remove to Edinburgh, and in their way they visit the Churches of Lithgow, which they altogether spoiled and ruined. They were willingly received in Edinburgh by the Magistrates, where they were no sooner entered, but they fell upon the Churches, which they ransackt and ruined with admirable speed. They begun at the great Church of St Giles, and from it to the Colledge Kirk, both which they spoiled of all their ornaments. From thence to the Black Friars Monasterie, which they overturned to the foundation. They likewise pulled down the Monasterie and Church of Gray Friars, and our Lady Kirk in the Fields (called Maria de Campis), and made them level with the ground. Thus, having defaced all the Churches in

Edinburgh, and pulled down those they pleased, they planted Reformed preachers in those they had reserved, and disposed of the government as they thought fit. Then they seized upon the Queen's palace of Holyroodhouse, with all the rich furniture, which they possessed and kept for their own use."—
LORD HERRIES' *Historie of the Reign of Marie Queen of Scots*.

These atrocities, for such undoubtedly they were (though even at the present day they have found apologists and defenders, who, in common consistency, are bound to vindicate the proceedings of Lord George Gordon and his fanatical mob), took place during the Regency of Mary of Guise. But the disposition to attack and deface religious edifices was not extinguished. In making Bothwell deceive the Queen by an account of an imaginary tumult in Edinburgh and an attack upon Holyrood Chapel, I have not outraged probability. Within a fortnight from the day when Queen Mary landed in her kingdom, she received practical proof of the tolerant spirit of her subjects, who, demanding freedom of worship for themselves, fell into the usual mistake of confounding freedom with monopoly. Before Mary left France she had expressly stipulated that she was to be allowed the privilege of worshipping God according to the rites of the Church to which she belonged, and

this was at once conceded by Murray in his character of delegate from the Lords of the Congregation. Trusting to this pledge, she gave orders that mass should be performed in the Royal Chapel of Holyrood ; but no sooner was this known than the tumults began. The Master of Lindsay put on his armour, assembled his followers, and rushed into the courtyard of the palace, exclaiming that the priests should die the death ! The almoner of the Queen was assaulted, and had difficulty in saving his life by flight. "This," says Herries, "took great impression on the Queen, for she knew this durst not have been done without the protection of great men. Lord James took upon him to pacify the tumult, which he did to the Queen's disadvantage."

In the same year Iona was "visited." I quote from the Statistical Account : "In 1561, the Convention of Estates passed an Act, at the desire of the Church, 'for demolishing all the Abbeys of monks and friars, and for suppressing whatever monuments of idolatry were remaining in the realm,' the execution whereof in the west was committed to the Earls of Arran, Argyle, and Glencairn. The learning of ages, which had been treasured up in Iona, the records of nations, and the valuable archives of remote antiquity, which had been safe there under the fury of barbarians, now fell at once a sacrifice. Authorised

by this, and by an ill-judged decree of the synod of Argyle, the zealous mob fell upon Iona, as the most valuable and venerated seat of the Popish clergy, and nothing escaped destruction but such parts of the building and such solid monuments as were proof against the hands of rage. Of three hundred and sixty crosses said to have been standing, only three were left. Some were thrown into the sea, many carried away, and to this day some are to be seen as gravestones in every churchyard in Mull and the surrounding islands. Pennant says that the cross at Campbelton was transported there from Iona. Spottiswoode writes, that ‘the very sepulchres of the dead were not spared, but digged, ript up, and sacrilegiously violated. Bibliotheks were destroyed, the volumes of the fathers, counsells, and other books of human learning, with the registers of the church, cast into the streets, afterwards gathered in heaps and consumed with fire.’”—*Statistical Account of Scotland*, 1845. The article, from which the above is extracted, was written by the parish minister.

After Mary was sent as a prisoner to Lochleven, Holyrood Chapel was honoured with another sanitary visit. According to Herries, “Before they left Edinburgh, the Earl of Glencairn, with his domestick servants onlie in his company, went to the Chapel of Halliroadhouse, and with great noise broke down the

altar, and defaced everything that pertained to the ornaments thair of ; which was much commended by the ministry for an act of pietie and zeal ; but the nobility did not approve of it, for they reprehended him for acting without a public order."

*" O tiger heart ! that fiercer grew
With every anguished breath she drew."—P. 169.*

ABDUCTION OF QUEEN MARY BY BOTHWELL.

The opponents of Queen Mary would have us believe that no real force was used, and that she was carried by Bothwell to Dunbar with her own consent. It is matter of surprise to me that a story so palpably absurd should ever have received credence ; for if Mary was possessed, as her calumniators say, by an infatuated passion for Bothwell, there was no occasion whatever for her resorting to so ridiculous an expedient. Bothwell had been tried for the murder, and acquitted. The strength of his own party is evident from the fact, already stated, that he was escorted to his trial by no less than four thousand gentlemen. His influence with the nobility is evidenced by the Band which was granted to him by so many men of high station, recommending him as a fit person to

marry the Queen, and pledging themselves to assist him in that object. If Mary had really desired the marriage, nothing more was needful than her consent to the advice of her councillors ; and she might then have wedded Bothwell publicly without reproach. There was actually no impediment in her way, supposing her to have been so inclined ; but we are asked to believe that, instead of following this clear and open course, she agreed that Bothwell should waylay her on the public highway, almost at the gate of her capital of Edinburgh, carry her off to Dunbar, and detain her there as a captive ! We are asked to believe that she willingly consented to appear, in the eyes of her subjects, as a woman whose person had been violated, and who could only obtain reparation of her wrong by marriage with her ravisher ! We are asked to believe that Bothwell, in the full knowledge that he might press his suit openly to a successful conclusion, having already the concurrence of the nobility, was mad enough to simulate a crime by which he incurred the penalties of high treason, and which could have no other effect than that of raising the indignation of the people, and forfeiting all chance of the future support of those peers and barons who were not implicated in any of the conspiracies of the time, but were devotedly attached to their Queen !

The real obstacle to the marriage was, that Bothwell, though he had obtained the support of the nobility, could not obtain the consent of the Queen. I believe that, up to the time of Darnley's murder, Mary regarded Bothwell with as much favour as could honestly be granted by a sovereign to a subject of high rank who had rendered extraordinary services. He had joined in none of the conspiracies which were directed against her, but, on the contrary, had been active in quelling them ; he had rejected with scorn all advances made to him by the emissaries of Elizabeth ; and—what was likely to weigh much with a woman of Mary's disposition—he had shed his blood in her cause. The visit which Mary, accompanied by her brother, had paid to him at Hermitage Castle, when he was lying wounded there, was a strong token of her sense of gratitude ; but her feelings towards him, as shown by her subsequent conduct, were of no warmer kind. That Mary should have believed him innocent of the murder of Darnley, need surprise no one. Among the avowed enemies of Darnley were the men who had murdered Riccio before her face, intending the same fate for Bothwell on account of his loyalty to her. Her suspicion naturally lighted upon those who had already shown themselves capable of any atrocity, and who had intelligible cause of hatred against Darnley,

their betrayer. With Darnley, Bothwell had no personal ground of quarrel ; and it certainly appeared most improbable that he would confederate with men who, a few months before, had sought to take his life. Besides this, popular rumour had not spared Mary herself. She had been accused, as she well knew, of being privy to the murder of her husband ; and, conscious of her own innocence, she would not believe Bothwell to be guilty. But I think, from certain circumstances which occurred about the time of Bothwell's trial, that Mary had begun to suspect that he was aspiring to her hand. Deeply as Murray had offended her on previous occasions, she wept passionately when he came to take leave of her, and besought him to remain in Scotland. This certainly she would not have done, if influenced by an infatuated passion for Bothwell. Immediately after the latter had obtained the Band from the nobility, he began to discover his purpose. The following extract is from Queen Mary's letter to the Bishop of Dunblane, written after her unhappy nuptials, for the purpose of explaining to the Court of France the position in which she stood. After alluding to the favour which she had previously shown to Bothwell, she says :—

“ But he, as well has appeared since then, making his profit of everything that might serve his turn,

not discovering to our self his intent, or that he had any such purpose in his head, was content to entertain our favour by his good outward behaviour and all means possible. And in the mean time went about by practising with the noblemen secretly to make them his friends, and to procure their consent to the furtherance of his intents ; and so far proceeded by means with them, before that ever the same came to our knowledge, that our whole Estates being here assembled in Parliament, he obtained a writing, subscribed with all their hands, wherein they not only granted their consents to our marriage with him, but also obliged themselves to set him forward thereto with their lives and goods, and to be enemies to all who would disturb or impede the same ; which latter he purchased, giving them to understand that we were content therewith.

“ And the same being once obtained, he begun afar off to discover his intention to us, and to assay if he might by humble suit purchase our goodwill ; but finding our answer nothing corresponding to his desire, and casting before his eyes all doubts that customarily men use to revolve with themselves in similar enterprises, the outwardness of our own mind, the persuasions which our friends, or his unfriends, might cast out for his hindrance, the change of their minds whose consent he had already obtained, with many

other incidents which might occur to frustrate him of his expectation, he resolved with himself to follow forth his good fortune, and all respects laid apart, either to tyne [lose] all in one hour, or to bring to pass that thing he had taken in hand ; and so resolved quickly to prosecute his deliberation, he suffered not the matter long to sleep, but within four days thereafter, finding opportunity, by reason we were past secretly towards Stirling to visit the Prince our dearest son, in our returning he awaited us by the way, accompanied with a great force, and led us with all diligence to Dunbar." It is easy to understand why Bothwell could not afford to wait ; because, the day after the Band was signed, Kirkaldy began to bestir himself, and his influence with the commons was such that he could very soon have raised an insurrection. I have no doubt that, notwithstanding this, he would have waited if there had been any reasonable ground for supposing that the Queen would ultimately consent ; but the failure of his father in his attempt to gain the hand of Mary of Guise (*vide* previous note), may have been regarded by him as a warning against delay.

I say nothing of what occurred at Dunbar ; but this much must be kept in mind, that the Act of Parliament for Bothwell's forfeiture (20th Dec. 1567) contains the following narrative :—

“And for that purpose, he [Bothwell], with a great number of armed men—to wit, a thousand horsemen in mail, and others equipped in warlike manner—did, on the twenty-fourth day of the month of April last, waylay our dearest mother Mary, then Queen of Scots, on her journey from Linlithgow to our city of Edinburgh, she suspecting no evil from any subject of hers, much less from the said Earl of Bothwell, to whom she had vouchsafed as many tokens of liberality and bounty as any prince could show or exhibit to a faithful subject; and with force and treasonable violence did seize upon her august person, and did lay violent hands upon her, not permitting her to enter the city of Edinburgh peacefully; but committed the heinous crime of ravishment upon her august person, by apprehending our said dearest mother on the public highway, and by carrying her away on the same night to the Castle of Dunbar, which was then in his keeping; by forcibly and violently incarcerating and holding her therein captive for the space of twelve days or thereby; and by compelling her, through fear, to which even the most constant of women are liable, to give him a promise of marriage at as early period as it possibly could be contracted.”

If there is any faith to be placed in public records or solemn acts of national assemblies, this statute,

which was passed after Mary was deposed, must clear her of the charge of deliberate collusion with Bothwell. Her enemies were then in power ; and it is not credible that they would have lost such an opportunity of justifying their rebellion, had they been able to show that Mary went willingly with Bothwell to Dunbar. The attainder of Bothwell was certain upon other grounds. Nay, more ; this Act was passed six months *after* the silver casket, alleged to contain letters from Mary to Bothwell, was seized, when Dalgleish, Bothwell's groom of the chambers, was apprehended. The letters are now, I believe, universally admitted to be rank forgeries ; but if any one should still entertain a doubt as to that, let him remember that the letters, if genuine, must have been in the hands of Murray and Morton six months before the Act for Bothwell's forfeiture was passed, and that, according to their tenor, the narrative of the Act was false. This is one of the most remarkable instances in history tending to show that deliberate villany leads to inextricable contradictions. If the letters said to be written by Mary to Bothwell were genuine—if they had even been forged at so early a period—is it conceivable that Murray, with such evidence in his hands, would, as Regent, have passed an Act which expressly acquits Mary of all complicity with Bothwell ? Be it remembered, also,

that at the time when that Act was passed, the Queen's cause was by no means desperate. A large party of the nobility and barons were convinced of her innocence, indignant at the treachery which had been used towards her, and determined to reinstate her on the throne ; and therefore the dominant faction was little likely to omit any opportunity of casting a stain upon her character.

I would further ask those who doubt the innocence of Mary, to consider how far her demeanour and that of Bothwell, after their marriage, is consistent with the theory of a devoted attachment upon her part. I shall not insist upon the fact that she was brought from Dunbar, not to Holyrood, but to the Castle of Edinburgh, where she was kept closely guarded till the day of marriage. That might have been collusive. But take Melville's account of what followed the nuptials : " When I returned to Edinburgh, I dealt with Sir James Balfour not to part with the Castle, whereby he might be an instrument to save the Prince and the Queen, who was so disdainfully handled, and with such reproachful language, that, in presence of Arthur Areskine, I heard her ask for a knife to stab herself, or else, said she, I shall drown myself." Five days after the marriage, Drury, writing to Cecil, said, " The opinion of divers is that the Queen is the most changed woman in face, that

in so little a time, without extremity of sickness, they have seen ;” and on the very day after the marriage, she said to De Croc, the French ambassador, “that he must not be surprised if he saw her sorrowful, for she could not rejoice, nor ever should again : all she desired was death.” Such were the manifestations of the vehement and passionate love which some historians would have us to believe that Mary felt for Bothwell !

*“ Was it a dream ? or did I hear
A yell of scorn assail my ear,
As frantic from the host I rode ? ”—P. 222.*

BOTHWELL'S FLIGHT FROM CARBERRY.

I have endeavoured, as nearly as poetical requirements would allow, to follow history accurately. I interpret the events thus. Bothwell, by carrying Mary off to Dunbar, at once consummated his own ruin. His fellow-conspirators might easily have rescued her from his hands ; but their object was to have her married to him, so they delayed. After the marriage had taken place, they lost no time, but strengthened themselves by calling in the aid of such of the Border barons as regarded with jealousy

the increasing power of the house of Hepburn. They could also depend upon the assistance of the craftsmen of Edinburgh, a body trained to the use of arms, and not degenerate from their fathers, who had fought valiantly at Flodden. Bothwell, on the other hand, had none beyond his own troopers in whom he could place perfect reliance. The royal summons had brought to Dunbar many of the East-Lothian barons, headed by Lords Seton, Yester, and Borthwick ; but they were not partisans of Bothwell, and came simply on account of the Queen. Bothwell was perfectly aware of this, and of the Queen's desire to escape, if possible, from his hands ; and that knowledge accounts for his behaviour. I shall quote once more from Melville :—

“ Both armies lay not far from Carberry : the Earl of Bothwell's men camped upon the hill, in a strength very advantageous ; the Lords encamped at the foot of the hill. And albeit her Majesty was there, I cannot call it her army, for many of those who were with her were of opinion that she had intelligence with the Lords, especially such as were informed of the many indignities put upon her by the Earl of Bothwell since their marriage. He was so beastly and suspicious, that he suffered her not to pass one day in patience, without making her shed abundance

of tears. Thus part of his own company detested him ; other part of them believed that her Majesty would fain have been quit of him, but thought shame to be the doer of the deed directly herself."

The statements in the poem regarding Kirkaldy of Grange are historically true. I must do Bothwell the justice to say that, from all the accounts extant, his challenges were not mere bravado, but that he was almost insaniely anxious to meet Morton in single combat. Bothwell was a man of great physical courage, which is more than can be said for the adversary whom he selected, who was very glad to accept of Lord Lindsay of the Byres as his substitute ; but a duel under such circumstances would have been ridiculous. Mary wanted to be rid of Bothwell, and signified as much to the Lords who came in obedience to her summons ; but with that noble spirit which was always her characteristic, she refused to make any terms with the confederated nobles until Bothwell's retreat was secured. Then, and not till then, she took an everlasting farewell of the man who, instigated by others, worse traitors than himself, had achieved her ruin. Her reception in the camp of the confederates does not fall within the scope of the poem.

*“ Till, chased across the open seas,
I met the surly Dane;
These were his gifts and welcome—these!
A dungeon and a chain.”—P. 224.*

BOTHWELL'S IMPRISONMENT AND CONFESSION.

After his flight from the northern islands, where he escaped with difficulty from the vessels sent in pursuit, under the command of Kirkaldy of Grange and Murray of Tullibardine, Bothwell was taken prisoner by a Danish man-of-war, and brought to Bergen in Norway. The cause of his arrest and detention seems to have been the absence of regular papers and passports, which led to the suspicion that his two ships had been employed for piratical purposes; and Bothwell, for obvious reasons, refused at first to disclose his name and quality. Concealment, however, was impossible, and he was then sent, by the desire of the King, to Denmark, where for a few months he remained at large, but under *surveillance*. The Regent Murray having discovered where he was residing, applied to Frederick II. to have him delivered up, on the allegation that he had been adjudged guilty of the death of Darnley. Frederick, however, was too cautious to acknowledge the authority of a man who had just dethroned his sister and

sovereign, but compromised the matter by subjecting Bothwell to close confinement in the fortress of Malmoe. The following is a translation of the order for his imprisonment: "FREDERICK. Be it known to you that we have ordered our well-beloved Peder Oxe, our man, Councillor and Marshall of the kingdom of Denmark, to send the Scottish Earl who resides in the Castle of Copenhagen, over to our Castle of Malmoe, where he is to remain for some time. Therefore we request of you that you will have prepared that same vaulted room in the Castle, where the Marshal Eyler Hardenberg had his apartment; and that you will cover with masonwork the private place in the said chamber, and where the iron bars of the windows may not be sufficiently strong and well guarded, that you will have them repaired; and when he arrives, that you will put him into the said chamber, give him a bed and good entertainment, as Peder Oxe will further direct and advise you; and that ye, before all things, will keep a strong guard, and hold in good security the said Earl as you may best devise, in order that he may not escape. Thereby our will is done.—Written in Friedrichsberg, 28th day of December, of the year after the birth of Christ 1567."

During the earlier part of his confinement, Bothwell appears to have occupied himself in the composi-

tion of memorials addressed to the King of Denmark, for the purpose of asserting his innocence and obtaining his liberty. These documents, which are of great historical interest, were printed for the Bannatyne Club from an authenticated copy of the originals, which are preserved in the royal library at Drottingholm, under the title of *Les Affaires du Conte de Boduel*; and they throw a strong light upon the daring character and mendacity of the writer. The narrative opens with the following declaration: "In order that the King of Denmark and the Council of his kingdom may be better and more clearly informed of the wickedness and treachery of my accusers hereafter named, I have (as succinctly as I am able) explained and truly declared the causes of the troubles and commotions which have occurred; of which they alone have been the principal authors and promoters from the year 1559 to the present time. I have similarly declared their calumnies, and the mischief and detriment they have occasioned to myself: which statement I can and will maintain to be true, as (with God's assistance) any one may clearly see and understand."

The narrative itself is exceedingly artful, truth and falsehood being blended together so dexterously as to make the story plausible, and to leave the impression that Bothwell had been made the innocent

victim of a deep-laid and unprincipled conspiracy. The first memorial appears, from its date, "Copenhagen, Eve of Twelfth day (*la vielle des roys*), 1568," to have been written immediately before his imprisonment; but the second is dated from Malmoe, 13 January 1568. In this latter document Bothwell assumes high ground, representing himself as an ambassador from Queen Mary to the King of Denmark, "comme allié et confédéré de la Royne," sent to solicit aid and assistance, in the shape of troops and vessels, towards rescuing her from the hands of her insurgent nobility. He further states that he is authorised, in return for such assistance, "to offer to his said Majesty to restore the islands of Orkney and Zetland, free and quit, without any reservation, to the crown of Denmark and Norway, as they had been in time past." No answer seems to have been made to these memorials, and the unhappy man remained a prisoner until his death. It has been stated, and I believe correctly, that after having been confined for several years in the fortress of Malmoe, he was removed for surer custody to the prison of Drachsholm, in which he ended his days.

Lord Herries, in his *Historie of the Reign of Marie Queen of Scots*, gives the following account of him after his flight from Zetland, and this may be taken as the popular rumour of that time. "From thence

he went to Denmark, where he was known by some Scots merchants that acquainted the Earl of Murray at their returne, when he was Regent. Whereupon he sends to the King of Denmark an information against him, and desired him to put him to death, for an example to all who shall attempt the Prince's lyfe. It is recorded that the King of Denmark caused cast him in a lothsome prisone, where none had access unto him but only those who carried him such scurvie meat and drink as was allowed, which was given him in at a little window. Here he was kept ten years, till, being overgrown with hair and filth, he went mad and died—a just punishment for his wickedness." It appears, however, from the published correspondence of M. de Danzay, ambassador from Charles IX. to the Court of Denmark, that Bothwell died in November 1575; and on 1st June of the following year, Queen Mary wrote from Sheffield to Betoun, Archbishop of Glasgow, her ambassador at Paris, as follows: "I have received intelligence of the death of the Earl of Bothwell; as also that before his decease he made an ample confession of his crimes, and acknowledged himself to have been the author and guilty of the murder of the late King, my husband, wherein he expressly acquits me, declaring me innocent even on the peril of the damnation of his soul. If this indeed be so,

this testimony would be of vast importance in refuting the false calumnies of my enemies. I pray you therefore, by every means, to ascertain the truth of this. Those who were present at the said declaration, which was afterwards signed and sealed in form of a testament, are Otto Braw of the Castle of Elcambre, Paris Braw of the Castle of Vascut, M. Gullunstarne of the Castle of Fulkenstere, the Bishop of Schonen, and four Bailiffs of the town." In reply, the Archbishop states that he had heard of the death of Bothwell, and that the French ambassador in Denmark had been instructed to apply for a formal copy of the testament. On 6th January 1577, Queen Mary again wrote to the Archbishop of Glasgow in these terms: "I am assured that the King of Denmark has transmitted to this Queen [Elizabeth] the testament of the late Earl of Bothwell, and that she has done the utmost in her power to suppress and keep it secret." About the same time the Archbishop wrote to Queen Mary that, according to his information, a copy of the testament had been sent to Scotland; that it had been in the hands of Murray of Tullibardine, the Comptroller; and that it had been perused by the Prince [James], who thereupon used the following words: "Tullibardine, have I not reason to be glad, considering the accusations and calumnies against my mother the Queen, so

often repeated to me, when I have this day seen so clear a proof of her innocence ?”

The authenticity of these letters, which are to be found in Keith and Labanoff, is undoubted ; and I think that they establish very clearly two things : 1st, That Bothwell did emit a dying declaration or testament ; and, 2dly, That copies of that document, if not the original, had been transmitted to England and Scotland. I might perhaps be entitled to say that they establish something more, viz. the tenor of that declaration, as testifying to Queen Mary’s innocence of any participation in the murder of Darnley ; but I do not wish to follow the example of those who have laboured to make out her guilt, by attaching too much importance to casual expressions or reported conversations. But the question will necessarily occur to every candid and inquiring mind—why, if this declaration was not favourable to Queen Mary, should it have been suppressed ? That suppression was freely used for the purpose of *injuring* Mary, is proved by a letter, printed in Goodall’s Appendix, from the Earl of Morton and others, Commissioners at the Conference in England, to the Regent ; in which, referring to a communication on this very subject from Denmark, they say : “ In that we had no will the contents of the same should be known, fearing that some words and matters mentioned in

the same, being dispersed here as news, should rather have hindered than forwarded our cause. And therefore, being desired at Court to show the letter, *we gave to understand that we had sent the principal away ; and delivered a copy, omitting such things as we thought not meet to be shown*, as your Grace may perceive by the like copy, which also we have sent you herewith."

Further, in a letter addressed by Sir John Forster to Secretary Walsingham (the original of which is preserved in the British Museum), dated 4th June 1581, and containing an account of the execution of the Earl of Morton, we find an express statement *that Bothwell's testament was given in evidence* against that nobleman on his trial for the King's murder. This fact is important, as removing the objection started by Mr Laing, that Bothwell, having died mad, was incapable of a genuine confession at his death. It proves also that he did emit a confession or testament, which was then considered as perfectly authentic, and also that this confession was received as good evidence by a Supreme Court of Justice, which assuredly would not have been the case had Bothwell, through insanity, been deemed incapable of making a deposition.

No copy of that testament has been preserved, and it is more than probable that none is in existence. Since the publication of the first edition of this Poem,

Earl Stanhope (whose contributions to history, as Lord Mahon, have elevated him to the first literary rank) has favoured me with information upon this point. His lordship writes: "It will interest you to hear that Lord Palmerston, being then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, consented to write a despatch to Sir Henry Wynn, then our Minister at the Court of Copenhagen, to inquire from the Danish Government whether any such document could be found in their archives. The answer, of which Lord Palmerston transmitted a copy to me, was, in substance, that no such document could be found, and that, as they believed, none such existed in Denmark." I find also, from a recent publication by Prince Alexander Labanoff—*Pièces et Documents relatifs au Comte de Bothwell, St Pétersburg, 1856*—that his inquiries, made in the same quarter, were equally unsuccessful. We have therefore only secondary evidence as to the terms and purport of that confession or testament, consisting of documents admittedly ancient, but not of a nature directly probative. The first of these, which has been made the subject of much controversy, is a document in French, with an English version appended, and is to be found in Keith's History. It is also contained in the collection relative to Bothwell, printed for the Bannatyne Club, with a statement, which I believe to be erro-

neous, that the original is preserved in the Cottonian collection. It was copied from a paper existing in the Scots College of Paris in 1734, but which has since disappeared, and is entitled, "Copy of a Relation of the Earl of Bothwell's Declaration at his Death, by one that was present." It bears no date, and the name of the writer is not appended to it. Consequently it is liable to criticism ; and has been criticised very severely indeed by the ingenious but somewhat bigoted Mr Laing.

After recounting the names of the persons who were present at the taking of the deposition or declaration, this document bears that the said parties "prayed the said Earl to declare freely and truly what he knew of the death of the late King Henry [Darnley], and of the authors thereof, according as he should answer before God at the day of judgment, where all things, however secret they may be here, shall be laid open. Then the said Earl, declaring that through his present great weakness he was not able to discourse all the separate steps of these things, testified that the Queen was innocent of that death, and that only he himself, his friends, and some of the nobility, were the authors of it." The writer of the paper further states, that "this whole narrative, *and much more largely extended*, was written both in Latin and Danish, and sealed with the King of Denmark's seal, and of the persons

who assisted as above." Now let us see in what manner Mr Laing deals with this document.

In the first place, he asserts that Queen Mary had seen *this paper* at the time when she wrote to Archbishop Betoun (as above quoted), with the intelligence of the death of Bothwell, and of his having made a confession. For this assertion he has no kind of authority. It is a pure hypothesis of his own ; and, so far as I can see, is rested entirely upon another assertion of his, viz. that the names of the parties mentioned in Queen Mary's letter as having been present at the confession, correspond with those set forth in the "Relation." Such, however, is not the fact. In the "Relation," Berin Goves, of the Castle of Malmoe, is mentioned immediately after the Bishop of Schonen, as one of the "quatre grands Seigneurs" present at the confession ;—in Queen Mary's letter the name of this lord does not appear. In like manner, Otto Braw is designated in the "Relation" as "of the castle of Ottenbrocht"—in Queen Mary's letter he is styled "of the castle of Elcambre." These variations are sufficiently important to negative the idea that Mary had seen this "Relation" before she wrote to Betoun ; and I think that Mr Laing himself has proved this to be impossible. Among the names of Bothwell's accomplices, as given in the "Relation," there occurs that of "my Lord Robert

Abbé de Sainte-Croix, *maintenant Comte des Isles Orchades*." Now, as Mr Laing truly enough remarks, Robert Stewart was not created Earl of Orkney until 1581, five years after the death of Bothwell ; but he accounts for the mistake—for such he assumes it to be—by supposing that Betoun had somehow or other conceived the idea that Stewart, who received a grant of the crown-lands of Orkney from Queen Mary in 1565, a short time before she married Darnley, had also got the title. In order to clear the way for this interpretation, we must suppose that Betoun deliberately forged the "Relation," and forwarded it to Mary, in order that she might write him to procure a copy of the original testament, which, in the opinion of Mr Laing, never had existence ! It does not seem to have occurred to Mr Laing that the natural explanation is, that the "Relation," which, as I have said already, bears no date, was penned *subsequently* to 1581, and that, in consequence, Robert Stewart is therein correctly designated as "MAINTENANT Comte des Isles Orchades." Had the "Relation" been mentioned or referred to in the letters either of Queen Mary or of Betoun, the objection would have had much force. But it never was mentioned or referred to ; and therefore the criticism is pointless. There is, however, in the Cottonian collection, British Museum, a document, marked as of date April 1576,

which, I think, bears strong internal evidence of its authenticity. It is an account of Bothwell's Confession, written in the Scottish dialect, and is so curious that I shall insert it here.

“CONFESSIOⁿ OF E. BOTHWELL.

“The confession of my Lord Bothwell before y dyed, in presence of dyvers Lords of Denmarke, being maire lang in latin and danisk.

“The Lords present weare these ; Baron Gowes of Malmye Castle, Otto Brawe of Elsenbronche Castell, Monsieur Gullionestarne of Fowlto^stie Castell, the Bishop of Skone and four Baylies of the towne ; wha desired him the he would declare his conscience, and say nothings by the truth, concernand the King and Queene of Scotland with the child.

“In primis, he did take it upon his death, that the Queene never knew nor consented to the death of the Kinge, but he and his friends, by his appointment, dyvers Lords consenting and subscribing thereunto ; whilk yet was not there present at the deed dooinge.

“There names be, Lord James Earl of Murray, Lord Morton, Lord Robert, the Bishop of St Andrewes, with dyvers others whome he sayd he could not remember at that present.

“Lykewise he sayd that all the frendship which he had of the Queene, he gatt alwayes by witchcraft,

and the inventions belanging thereunto, specially by use of sweete water, and that he found means to put away his ower wife to obtayne the Queene."

The remainder of the confession relates to his personal intrigues, several of which are specified, "with many lyke, whilk he sayd were lang to rehearse ; and forgave all the world, and was sorrowful for his offences ; and did receive the sacrament, that all the thinges he speake weare trew. And soe he dyed."

I may, in conclusion, observe that Mr Laing, in stating that "the testament is a shallow forgery," seems to confound things essentially apart. If there was a testament, as I think is very clearly demonstrated, upon what authority does Mr Laing assert that it was forged ? No copy of the testament now exists, and we have only a general statement of its tenor. It never was in the hands of Queen Mary, her advisers, or agents—if anywhere, it was in the hands of her enemies. *Did they forge it ?* Probably, however, Mr Laing meant to say that the "Relation" was a forgery. To support that view, he has done nothing more than urge the objections which I trust I have sufficiently refuted ; and it certainly is a remarkable fact that this paper, if forged, was never heard of until long after Queen Mary perished on the scaffold. For my own part, without attaching undue weight to this document, I consider it entitled to as

much credence as can be given to any which is not authenticated by the name of the writer. If Bothwell emitted no confession, the "Relation" is of course a forgery. If, on the contrary, he did emit a confession, as seems proved both by the letters of Queen Mary and Betoun, and, above all, by the fact that such a document was produced at the trial of Morton, then the "Relation" becomes valuable, as showing what was the general tenor of the confession of Bothwell, in regard, at least, to the innocence of Mary.

THE END.

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